



솔로플레이의제왕

다다트 게임판타지 소설

EMPEROR OF SOLO PLAY

BOOK 01

D-Dart

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

Emperor of Solo Play

(솔플의 제왕)

by

D-Dart

(디다트)

Synopsis

Year 2035.

The virtual reality game, Warlord, changed the world.

An Jaehyun was one of the many who wished to change his life through the game.

After dedicating his life to the game, he was met with a betrayal.

A betrayal by his comrades.

As a result, he lost everything.

But a chance was given to him.

A chance to redo everything again!

“I won’t play with others ever again. Whatever the outcome, I’ll show that I can do it alone.”

Others rolled a die to split the spoils of victory.

An Jaehyun ate it all by himself.

It was the start of An Jaehyun’s solo game life.

Copyright © 2016 by Lisa Hayes

All rights reserved.

English Translation by FudgeNouget @ [Novels&Chill](#)

Translation Edit by Beno @ [Novels&Chill](#)

ePub conversion by Lisa Hayes @ [Hasseno Blog](#)

This is a free eBook. You are free to give it away (in unmodified form) to whomever you wish.

No part of this eBook may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Prologue

I've been called trash my whole life.

I wasn't born with any special talent, nor was I better at something than others. So I couldn't say anything whenever I was called trash. That isn't to say I never struggled to become better. But at the end of the day, I fell asleep kicking the bed sheets in anger.

This goddamned life.

But for the first time, I found something I was better at than others.

Virtual reality (VR) games!

In real life, I was at the bottom of the food chain. But in the virtual world, I was at the top. Even the so called professional-gamers were mere preys in my eyes.

To top it off, you could gain unimaginable wealth and prestige just by being good at gaming. This was the era of VR games.

I had no hesitation.

To succeed through gaming, I was prepared to give my life. I did anything to accomplish my goals. Everything was fair in the name

of success.

In the end, the goal I've been striving for was within my reach, just a hair's breadth away.

Just a bit more, just a bit!

I could have reached my goal in just a bit more...

"Fuckers."

I never thought my comrades would betray me. The ones I thought would stay by my side until the end.

"Fuck."

My comrades betrayed me, and in an instant, four years of hard work disappeared into the void.

I tried to fight back, but I was powerless. A hole had been pierced through my stomach, and I even developed sociophobia.

"See if I trust anyone ever again."

When I was given a chance to start over, I knew what path to take.

“Whatever the outcome, I’ll do it alone... I’ll show you that I can do it alone.”

The Solo Path!

This is how I’ve come to tread this road.

Chapter 1. The Hero Slaughterer (1)

Ulbrid Woods.

It was a difficult training spot where only users over level 250 could survive. It was filled with ferocious One-Horned Wolves, and was also the home of the boss monster Scarface. The level 355 Scarface was without a doubt one of the top 9 strongest monsters discovered in the game so far. It was truly a monster among monsters.

Only the top-level players of the world's most popular game, Warlord, could step into this place. It was why the Ulbrid Woods was one of the quietest places in the game world. Of over ten million players of Warlord, less than five thousand were at this level.

That said, the place was currently crowded with people, enough to describe it as congested.

There were over forty players filling up what little space remained between the tree trunks. Some even stood on the branches of the trees that soared into the skies like columns of the Parthenon.

And in the center, there was a single man.

He was wearing what could only be described as hiking clothes. His outfit resembled a soldier's camouflage uniform, letting him blend in with his surroundings. This average-looking man seemed

like an ordinary hiker, nothing more and nothing less.

On the contrary, the ones surrounding the man wore yellow and green uniforms. The males wore coats that resembled what the army executives wore during World War II, and the women wore wearing knee-high skirts unfit for traveling in the woods. Their fashion was passable, but it wasn't appropriate for the situation.

A very tense, emotional situation.

“Brother Dongsoo!”

At An Jaehyun's shout, a man across from him clenched his mouth even harder.

“Why are you doing this?”

An Jaehyun asked the man again.

“Sorry.”

With his mouth still shut, the man let out an apology. An Jaehyun could only be dumbfounded by the apology, and simply scoffed at the man.

“Fuck, are you for real?”

At this moment, a memory from four years ago flashed across An Jaehyun's mind.

The year was 2036, a year after the virtual reality game, Warlord, made its debut. With its release, Warlord completely dominated the field of VR games. Anyone hoping to become famous transferred to Warlord. There were endless opportunities for wealth and fame.

That was when An Jaehyun first met Kim Dongsoo. He had already built a name for himself in another VR game, and he was looking for life-long comrades to start anew. That was when An Jaehyun joined hands with him.

The two of them held an unbreakable relationship. In his four, long years with Kim Dongsoo, An Jaehyun hunted monsters, raided bosses, and fought with other players. They were battles with their lives on the line. It would have been weird for them not to develop such a close relationship.

Their bond was not only unbreakable, but tight. The number of lives they lost trying to save each other neared a hundred. In-game death meant being unable to play for 48 hours and dropping a random item in the player's possession. For such a price, they were willing to die many times over.

That was the kind of person Kim Dongsoo was to An Jaehyun.

Someone closer to him than his own family.

Now, he wore an emblem on his chest. An emblem with five lightning symbols forming a whirlpool of lightning.

The Stormhunter Guild.

They were rivals Kim Dongsoo and An Jaehyun had to overcome to achieve the wealth and fame they so deeply desired. They were also the enemies they had been facing for the past four months.

“Brother Dongsoo, if you’re trying to throw me a surprise party, fine. But please, don’t cosplay as those lightning-struck lunatics.

Lightning-struck lunatics.

Only An Jaehyun would call the Stormhunter Guild by that name.

Warlord had over ten million active users, and over a hundred million people actively following the game. There weren’t many people who could treat one of Warlord’s Top 30 Guilds like it was his neighbor dog.

“Fuck.”

Of course, it wasn’t that An Jaehyun didn’t understand the situation he was in.

Cosplay? Surprise party?

“Doesn’t look like you guys are interested in my jokes.”

It wouldn’t be wrong to say An Jaehyun was the stupidest man alive, but he wasn’t so dense as to not know the gravity of the situation.

“You told me to come to Ulbrid Woods in such a hurry that I thought you found a Gold-Horned Wolf or something. I even dropped the fried chicken I was eating to log-in, and this is what I get? If that wasn’t enough, you betrayed me for the Stormhunter Guild? Of all the Top 30 Guilds, why those fuckers?”

Huuu!

An Jaehyun thought his heart would burst from just thinking about what was going on.

“Alright, fine. Let me hear the reason first.”

“Sorry.”

“How much did they offer? How much did they pay to make you backstab your comrades of four years?”

“I didn’t betray my comrades.”

At Kim Dongsoo’s reply, An Jaehyun placed his hands over his

ears, as if he had just heard the most ludicrous thing.

“Huh? Did I hear that right? You didn’t betray your comrades? Did the National Institute of Korean Language change the definition of ‘betray’ while I wasn’t aware? Or did I just hear wrong? If I did, I’ll have to report this as a bug.”

“As of today, the Hahoe Mask Guild is a sub-group of the Stormhunter Guild.”

“Haha.”

An Jaehyun could only let out empty laughs in response. He’s laughed countless number of times in his life, but he never thought he could choke out an empty laugh like this.

And in response to An Jaehyun’s laugh, Kim Dongsoo delivered the final blow.

“I’m sorry Jaehyun. It’s just you that needs to die.”

An Jaehyun’s laughing stopped, and he became expressionless.

A bone-chilling glint appeared from his eyes. It was frightening enough to cause goose-bumps even in a VR world. Some of the surrounding men and women took in a deep breath. If they didn’t, they thought they would be suffocated to death.

At that moment, a woman appeared from behind a tree.

A model-like height and an awe-inspiring figure. The woman wore skin-tight skirts and a short-sleeved shirt. Her long, straight hair was tied in a ponytail, giving off the impression that she was full of energy.

Plus, she was extremely beautiful.

Her lips formed a small arc, forming a cute smile. Her smile seemed to have the power to intoxicate others.

With such smile, the woman stared at An Jaehyun.

“An Jaehyun.”

She called his name.

Tssk.

An Jaehyun clicked his tongue.

“Choi Sulyeon.”

Choi Sulyeon.

She lived a completely different world than An Jaehyun, and

would continue to live a life he could never imagine.

She was the heiress to Korea's leading chaebol family. From birth, she was raised to aim for the top. She was Korea's leading model, on top of being an abled businesswoman who would become the leader of Korea's economic world.

When she first started Warlord, millions of people were curious what a talented girl like her could accomplish with the backing she had.

As if to respond to her expectations, Choi Sulyeon became one of Korea's top players. She gathered the top players of Asia to form the Stormhunter Guild. It was with her effort that the Stormhunter Guild became one of Warlord's Top 30 Guilds.

No one seemed to be capable of blocking her way. At least, no one was her match anywhere within Asia. Even if she were to say this herself, it would not be arrogance, but a cold hard fact.

That was... until An Jaehyun appeared.

“An Jaehyun.”

“My ears are wide open, you don't need to say my name twice. Besides, since when did we get so close to call each other by our real names? If you don't want me cutting off your neck and playing volleyball with it like before, then shut your mouth.”

“An Jaehyun, An Jaehyun, An Jaehyun.”

This bitch!

An Jaehyun barely suppressed himself from yelling out his thoughts. Looking at him, Choi Sulyeon let out a enchanting smile.

“So? What do you think about this situation? Cool, isn’t it?”

Four months ago, the Hahoe Mask Guild and the Stormhunter Guild clashed.

The Hahoe Mask Guild grew at an astonishing rate, and in just four years, it became powerful enough to threaten the Top 30 Guilds. The Hahoe Mask Guild’s first Champion Title Match was against the Stormhunter Guild.

They faced each other in several small clashes, and in the end, a representative from each guild fought in an one-on-one duel.

Choi Sulyeon... no, the Storm Queen Shir fought against An Jaehyun, otherwise known as the Hero Slaughterer Hyrkan.

Their live battle sold over six hundred thousand tickets. Even with each ticket costing ten thousand won, they managed to sell so much in a single week. It showed how much the world was interested in their battle.

A massive debate sparked over the outcome.

On one side was the Storm Queen, who played the game since its Beta days and never left the top 50 rankings. On the other side was the Hero Slaughterer, someone who started playing a full year after the Storm Queen, yet managed to rise to top 100 rankings. He had already slain thirty three rankers.

However, the real battle betrayed their expectations. It was nothing more than a one-sided slaughter.

An Jaehyun's overwhelming victory.

It was as if a puppy had been paired up to fight a tiger. An Jaehyun completely dominated Choi Sulyeon.

With this victory, the Hahoe Mask Guild was no longer one of the numerous challengers for the Top 30 Guilds, but a guild that could easily enter it given the chance.

In fact, it was speculated that the Hahoe Mask would take one of the 30 broadcasting studios as its sponsor, and officially become one of the Top 30 Guilds. They only had to wait for the broadcasting studios to finish their annual Warlord Guilds Analysis. Many sponsors flocked to the Hahoe Mask Guild, while sponsors of the Stormhunter Guild slowly backed out.

'We would've had a live channel in 2 months!'

All An Jaehyun had to do was wait. In just two months, he would obtain the wealth and fame he had been working for.

That's why he couldn't understand Kim Dongsoo.

Why would he betray him?

What would he gain from it?

There was one thing An Jaehyun knew for sure.

Choi Sulyeon. This bitch had done all this just to screw over An Jaehyun. He didn't know what she did, but she did it to a perfection. She was thoroughly prepared to send An Jaehyun to hell.

"Don't just glare at us, say something. How are you feeling?"

"I feel like someone chopped my head off and played with it like a volleyball. I'd imagine you know exactly how it feels like."

"You can still joke around? Impressive."

Choi Sulyeon's expression changed. Her smile disappeared, and she took on a serious face befitting the guildmaster of the Stormhunter Guild.

“I’ll give you one last chance. Kneel and swear your loyalty to me. I’ll take you in, too.”

It seemed like Choi Sulyeon wanted to turn him into her slave.

An Jaehyun contemplated for a short time.

If he were to tell Choi Sulyeon to fuck off, the Stormhunter Guild would chase him to the ends of the earth to PK him. His life would become a lot more difficult. To top it off, his own Hahoe Mask Guild would be leading the charge to kill him.

The logical answer would have been to concede.

Humiliation?

Being humiliated was nothing compared to losing everything he had worked towards. If it was the old An Jaehyun, the talentless and pitiable him, then he would have cast aside his pride.

He might have even wagged his butt at the thought of serving a beauty like her. He would have crawled on the ground to show her a good performance.

No, he wasn’t any different now.

He’d lost everything with nothing to show for. All he had left was his pride.

Pride that no one cared about.

A cheap and worthless pride...

‘Never thought I’d make a self-discovery like this.’

He couldn’t do it.

An Jaehyun, although he could give his pride to a random dog on the streets, could not give it to Choi Sulyeon.

“Your answer?”

To Choi Sulyeon’s question, An Jaehyun remained silent.

“Jaehyun!”

Kim Dongsoo urged him, but An Jaehyun ignored him too. Instead, his hands quickly spun the dial on his watch.

“Ah!”

“Fuck, is he crazy?”

“Everyone get ready!”

Choi Sulyeon, Kim Dongsoo, and the rest all moved their watch dials.

When the dial pointed to the number they wanted, they shouted,

“Slot on!”

In an instant, sticky liquid poured out from their watches and covered their bodies. The liquid immediately turned into defensive items. Some wore shining suits of armor, some wore loose, fluttering clothes, and others wore uniforms giving off a holy aura.

On the other hand, An Jaehyun wore a tight fitting black leather clothing. He brought his hands next to his waist and grabbed the hanging hahoe mask.

He quickly swiped on the mask and spoke through the mouth gap.

“I’ll make you regret this day for the rest of your lives.”

The Hero Slaughterer Hyrkan!

He declared war against the Stormhunter Guild and the Hahoe Mask Guild that betrayed him.

Chapter 2. The Hero Slaughterer (2)

“Give me a 10,000 won worth.”

An Jaehyun took out 2 five thousand won bills from his wallet. The convenience store’s part-time worker tilted his head in a daze.

An Jaehyun adjusted his thick glasses and spoke again.

“Can I get my lottery ticket?”

“Ah, sorry.”

The part-time worker snapped out of his daze and took the money. He then smoothly picked out a lottery ticket for An Jaehyun. While handing out the ticket, the part-time worker kept examining An Jaehyun’s face.

“Um, have I met you before?”

Putting the lottery ticket in his wallet, An Jaehyun left the convenience store without giving him an answer. At this, the part-time worker titled his head again.

“I feel like I’ve seen him before... gah, whatever.”

The part-time worker shook his head and grabbed his tablet paper from the counter. He unpaused the video and watched it

with great interest.

-Mr. Kim Dongsoo, how's the situation right now?

-The Albino Dragon received heavy damage to his right wing. Our first objective has been accomplished.

-What about the losses?

-We lost five so far.

-Do you think you'll succeed in killing the Albino Dragon?

-The Stormhunter Guild is Warlord's greatest guild, and our Hahoe Mask team is its strongest attack team. We don't worry about success or failure. We only worry about how we'll succeed.

-How romantic.

-Haha. Without a bit of romance, who would suffer through such hardships?

The part-time worker smiled lightly as he watched the video.

“As expected of the Stormhunter Guild. It's really the best. None of the other guilds is its match after joining up with the Hahoe Mask Guild.

Following his smile was a slight sense of disappointment.

“What a shame. If only they still had the Hero Slaughterer... what is he doing these days? Did he quit the game completely?”

The part-time worker once again tilted his head at this question. But that was it.

Soon, he silently went back to watching more videos.

An Jaehyun had long disappeared from his mind.



‘Fuck. I can’t believe you can’t buy a lottery ticket from your home in this day and age. Why do you have to be there in person? What, are people worried a five-year old will buy one online?’

An Jaehyun gritted his teeth remembering the part-time worker from just now.

But his anger soon died down. He remembered the video the part-time worker was watching.

‘Albino Dragon. Level 439.’

An Jaehyun had already watched the broadcast. In fact, he even bought the 30,000 won live ticket to watch the raid. The Stormhunter Guild failed four times, barely succeeding on the fifth.

‘If I was there with my old team, I would’ve killed it in first try.’

How sad.

He was sad that the Stormhunter Guild didn’t fail, and he was sad that he wasn’t there participating.

What he was most sad about though was...

‘Damn it. If I killed that thing, I wouldn’t need a lottery ticket.’

The value of the Albino Dragon.

It was a huge pile of money. It was the highest leveled monster in Warlord so far. Each raid sold over five hundred thousand live tickets. If the raid was successful, then the edited paid video could get at least ten million views.

‘I heard they sold over 350,000 live tickets. They’re each 30,000 won to boot.’

A live ticket allowed someone to watch a raid in real-time.

The successful raid video cost money to view, but it easily passed three million views within its first week of release. Although you're only left with about forty percent after taxes and fees, it was still an incredible amount.

There was more.

‘A boss monster in the 430s. The item cost...’

Large monsters, especially boss monsters, are pretty much made of money.

Dragons were especially expensive. From the bottom of their tongue to the wrinkles in their anus, every part of them was money.

Their hides were used for defensive items and their bones for weapons. A dragon's heart was the greatest material for a magic weapon, its meat and organs could be used as potion materials, and its eyes sold for a hefty price to a rich collector...

‘If a level 400+ unique item pops from those materials, its price would simply be whatever the seller calls.’

At the very least, those materials can make a level 350 gear. The price of those go by the millions. If it's over level 400 or if it's a rare rank, it'd be in the ten millions. If the crafter gets lucky and pops a unique rank, it'd be worth an expensive sports car. Warlord is filled with rich people who would buy something like that

without blinking an eye.

Taking all this into account, the Stormhunter Guild probably made about a hundred billion won with the Albino Dragon raid.

That was this era.

Just by killing a single monster in a game, you could earn more than a major corporation affiliate could in a whole year.

“Damn it.”

An Jaehyun could have been the hero of this era. Back then, if he just crawled and begged like a dog, if he sold his worthless pride and wagged his tail at that woman...

Or, if he didn't go crazy because of his worthless pride, if he didn't war with them over his anger at their betrayal, if he gave up and started over from elsewhere... he wouldn't be buying lottery tickets and surviving on ramen noodles like now.

Bitter regrets.

“Damn it.”

‘So I turned out to be the one regretting that day for the rest of my life.’

On that day he was betrayed, the words he yelled haunted him in his nightmares. Because of it, An Jaehyun kicked his bed sheets every night.

An Jaehyun slumped his head down.

“God damn it...”

Just a bit more.

If he wasn't betrayed, he would have obtained wealth and fame along with everyone else.

No, the ones who betrayed him did obtain wealth and fame. Their SNS pages were filled with pictures of them riding the best sports car, going to celebrities' birthday parties, and wearing and using countless brand names.

An Jaehyun was the only one swimming in the sewage.

‘5 years....’

An Jaehyun was well past his mid-twenties. He was staring at the 30 year old mark with nothing to show for himself. He was far from any wealth or fame, and he was barely getting by with his gaming skills.

Bzzz!

At that time, An Jaehyun's watch vibrated. He checked its screen and held it next to his ears.

“Brother Taehoon.”

-Yo, Jaehyun.

“What's up?”

-What are you doing lately? Still playing Warlord? You didn't delete your character or anything, right?

“The character is still there, but I don't play it anymore.”

-What level are you?

“Level 250.”

-Gears?

“Bro, don't mess with me. Or are you really curious?”

An Jaehyun clenched his teeth.

He declared war against Stormhunter Guild and the betrayers.

He fought against the world by himself.

It wasn't so bad at first. An Jaehyun was strong. No one at his level was his match. He could even win 4 on 1 against higher level players. So at first, he killed anyone he came across. His gain wasn't small either. Items from a Stormhunter Guild member were nothing to scoff at. Each kill could net him about as much as a monthly salary of a major corporation's new employee.

The problem was stamina. If he died once, he wouldn't be able to play for another 48 hours. He was facing up against groups of hundreds of top level players.

As a result, their difference in stamina turned into difference in levels and items. No other guild or raid team would accept him as a member, and many wouldn't even buy his items. Choi Sulyeon was a frightening woman. She overwhelmed An Jaehyun, not through the game, but through the real world.

In the end, An Jaehyun gave up. When he dropped his main weapon from a game over, he quit Warlord. He hasn't played since. He just watched related videos and broadcasts.

It's not like he's given up on games. He looked into other VR games, but none made as much money as Warlord. He managed to get into an AOS game called The Legend, which barely gave him enough to get by.

He met Jung Taehoon in The Legend. He was a broker. He connected skilled players like An Jaehyun with those hopelessly

bad at gaming and collected fees.

They haven't had much contact recently. Because of An Jaehyun's over-the-top skills, The Legend admins put a year-long ban to his account. Jung Taehoon was the first one to cut his contact with An Jaehyun.

But now he suddenly called and poked at An Jaehyun's past wounds. It would have made anyone feel bad.

-Sorry.

“Just get to the point. I'm tired of having my hand up.”

-Are you perhaps interested in working at a Chinese workshop? It's 5 million won a month, excluding bonuses. All paid in cash.

Hearing his words, An Jaehyun was more sad than happy.

‘Fuck.’

A Chinese workshop. It's pretty much a sweatshop. They work people like machines, human rights don't apply. They're just human machines, their personalities and talents ignored completely. It was a place simply to make money.

It was really the end of the line.

People who couldn't do normal part-time jobs went there. For old celebrities like An Jaehyun, going there would be no different to selling organs. It was throwing what little pride he had left down the drain.

Realizing he was at such a point, he felt sorry for himself.

“Bro, I'm the Hero Slaughterer. I've killed those Stormhunter fuckers 733 times, and you're telling me to go to a Chinese workshop and work like dogs?”

If he were going to sell his pride like this, he should've done it a long time ago.

-Come on, don't be so uptight. The conditions are great. Plus, you're probably not going to make much money off Warlord now that all the Top 30 Guilds have you on their wanted list. Your leveling stopped too. You might've been at the top back then, but level 250 now can barely get you to the top one percent. You realize what that means, right? From the 10 million or so players, over a hundred thousand are better than you.

“I know that...”

-Swallow your pride and work for just one year. With your skills, you can earn about a 100 million in a year. You're going to be thirty soon. It's a whole different life from then. You should have at least a 100 million prepared.

“No, no, I’m fine. I’m hanging up.”

-Call me if you change your mind. There’s always a spot open for you.

An Jaehyun lightly spun his watch dial with an expression full of anger. The call ended. He wanted to chuck his phone, but it was impossible for a watch-type phone. Even if he could, he wouldn’t because of the cost.

‘God damn it.’

Could things get any worse? An Jaehyun wanted his messed up life to be a bad dream.

But,

‘5 million.’

He didn’t want to fall and give in to his life.

Moreover, he had confidence.

‘Warlord is hard for me right now, but Warlord isn’t the only game. If I get that 100 million, wait until a decent game comes out, start playing from the beginning, get into the top rankings, and make a guild... given 2,3 years I could probably...’

An Jaehyun definitely had talent. He may be socially awkward, tone deaf, hopeless at sports, and uneducated in real life, but in the game world, he had the confidence to not lose to anyone.

An Jaehyun lifted his hand.

“Jung Taehoon.”

He knew it was unsightly to accept an offer he had just refused, but he didn't think much of it.

[Calling Jung Taehoon.]

An Jaehyun put his wrist watch next to his ears, and he listened to the ringtone. It was Michael Jackson's Billie Jeans. The half-a-century old song sounded fresh in his ears.

At that moment.

CRASH!

A giant truck struck the bus station An Jaehyun was waiting in.

-Good decision, Jaehyun! Let's do this! With these conditions, you can totally pull it off. Right? Jaehyun? Say something!

An Jaehyun.

He was 29 years old.

Chapter 3. A Class You Can Play Alone (1)

2010 was the era of smartphones. They changed the lives of millions of people.

But technology continued advancing, and in year 2030, the smartphone era came to an end. It was now the new era of virtual reality. Peach Corporation's virtual reality connection device, V-Gear, gave way to the beginning of this era. For just 20,000 dollars, any household could dive into the world of virtual reality.

The smartphone era was nothing in comparison to the VR era. Virtual reality did not just absorb the technologies of the real world, as new content developed just for the virtual world.

Among them, virtual reality games were the most popular.

Game companies didn't hesitate to invest millions or even billions of dollars into developing this new technology. As a result, they could release higher quality content than any other business in the world.

At the same time, it was the start of a war.

Due to their investments and preparedness, their games had similar quality, and none stood out as the best.

It was the beginning of a warring era.

Game companies experimented with new methods of raising their market shares, and many went bankrupt as a result. The one that put an end to this warring era was not a game company, but an AI developing company called Tobot Soft. It was with their AI program that Warlord was created.

Warlord.

With a typical fantasy setting, the game was not too different from the other games in the market. In fact, it was much tamer compared to games where the players battled in space or flew in the air with wings.

It was the scale of its world and its stability that made it unsurpassable by others.

Tobot Soft's secret lied behind a management artificial intelligence program called M.I.

Simply put, the game wasn't controlled by the company but an artificial intelligence program. Its initial development cost was huge, but the management cost was ground-breakingly small. At a time when the price of VR game programmers was soaring to the sky, the method proved to be especially efficient. A.I.s didn't need a salary.

Plus, it was easy to copy and mass produce an A.I. Hiring a thousand professional programmers took at least six months, but obtaining a thousand copy of an A.I. took only about a month.

Countless A.I.s worked to control and manage the server, and as a result, Warlord became a game that surpassed any other game in existence.

March 11th, 2035, a year after the game made its debut, the player base was well over one million. By its 4th anniversary, the number rose to over ten million, worthy of the game's title as the greatest game to ever exist.

Ten million was not a small number.

To play a VR game, one needed a VR device. Peach Corporation controlled 70 percent of the VR device market and its cheapest VR device, the Level 1 V-Gear, cost 20 thousand dollars.

In addition, one needed 2,599 dollars just to create a Warlord character. Upon creation, one could play the game free for 3 months, but afterwards, there was a monthly fee of 799 dollars.

In Korean standards, it cost 20 million won to buy the gaming device, another 3 million to make a character, and 800 thousand more every month.

There were ten million people who could meet such requirements.

An economist once said,

“If you calculate the average income of a Warlord player, it

would be about 80 thousand dollars. A game with over 10 million players and an average income of 80 thousand. That's enough purchasing power to match a country's."

Businesses smelled the money just as easily.

Numerous companies and corporations became sponsors of Warlord players that had fame and influence. Famous rankers, especially the official top 100 rankers, were walking advertisements, and their bodies were worth at least a billion won.

Most importantly, Warlord was fun.

Players with superhuman powers killing monsters with different skills and magic was more exciting than any movie, and the fact that a player could die at any time made the game more thrilling than any sports in the world.

Someone once said,

"The proliferation of virtual reality games had the biggest impact on sports and movie industries. No matter how thrilling a sports is, no sportman puts their life on line, but in the game world, everyone fights with their life on the line. No matter how well-made a movie is, at the end of the day, a movie is a movie. It has a set scenario, while gamers create their own scenario. A game character is one's second life, and in this world, a movie can never beat a real life."

In this era, one could gain the wealth and prestige of a professional soccer player or a major league star just by gaming. As a result, countless people sought to become this era's protagonist.

However.

“Becoming a famous gamer? Only one out of every thousand can do that. Right now in Warlord, there's only about 3,000 people who make over a 100 million won. Considering Warlord's player base, that's less than the top 0.01 percent. Plus, imagine the amount of money you have to spend to maintain your ranking that high. Take any one of these 3,000 people, they probably spent just as much on Warlord as they earned.”

Only a very small minority of players could enjoy the life of wealth and fame.

“Not to mention, VR games are completely different than PC games. You can't get better by just leveling up. It's about talent. Even though it's an RPG game, you can't become a ranker with just levels and items. If you start playing with that mindset, you'll end up quitting within a month. You just have to enjoy it. Warlord is the world's most unfair game. If you compare yourself to others, you won't win over your inferiority complex.”

Right, virtual reality games were more unfair than any other games.

Even in PC games, there are good players and bad players. In a VR world, where everyone has superhuman powers, the difference

was even clearer.

That's not all.

In Warlord, the best way to earn money was through live broadcasts.

However, only 30 channels were given permission to broadcast Warlord-related content. In the past, when problems began to arise from gambling and swearing in private broadcasts, most countries began to require licenses for broadcasting certain content. In the case of Warlord, only 30 channels were given licenses.

That was how the Top 30 Guilds were created. Guilds that obtained broadcasting channels received no small benefits.

Furthermore, these guilds used the money and influence gained through live broadcasts and live tickets to prevent other guilds from challenging their authority. Although everyone aimed to become one of the Top 30 Guilds in the beginning, the gap between a Top 30 Guild and a non-Top 30 Guild only grew wider over time.

They were in a league of their own.

By the time Warlord entered its 4th year of service, no one could threaten to close this gap.

Except one.

The Hahoe Mask Guild.

Its members all fought wearing hahoe masks. Despite a majority of them having started a year after existing rankers, they showed incredible skills and results. In time, they even started to threaten the positions of the Top 30 Guilds.

And in the middle of this storm was Hyrkan.

His nickname, the Hero Slaughterer.

The nickname was given to him because he effortlessly slaughtered the rankers that represented Warlord.

He was a monster that defied logic.

“Hyrkan? He’s a real monster, the kind that disrupts an ecosystem. He throws a 150 km fastball, then throws a 250 km fastball right afterwards. Plus, he games harder than anyone else. That’s what VR games are all about. No matter how much time you invest, someone without talent can’t beat someone with talent. Even if someone with talent achieves something by investing time, it becomes nothing in front of greater talent. I assure you, Hyrkan is at the top in both talent and effort. If he started just a year earlier, no one would be his match.”

A monster that disrupts an ecosystem.

It was an apt description.

It was also the reason why Hyrkan was ostracized.

“Why Hahoe Mask Guild betrayed Hyrkan? It’s simple. They would’ve been ostracized by the Top 30 Guilds otherwise. At first, they all fought to recruit Hyrkan, but they soon realized it wasn’t going to happen. Hyrkan isn’t the type to bow his head in front of others. A tiger can grow up drinking a dog’s milk, but a tiger is a tiger, a dog is a dog.”

The Top 30 Guilds were already making enormous profit in their own ecosystem.

There was no way they would stand still and watch a monster like Hyrkan ruin it. Even so, they suffered more harm than good trying to take him out.

Hyrkan. Although he was nicknamed the Hero Slaughterer, he never actively sought out to kill others. It was always three or four rankers that attacked him first, and he only retaliated. Hyrkan never wanted to become a “slaughterer.”

So when Stormhunter Guild absorbed Hahoe Mask Guild and declared war on Hyrkan, the rest of the Top 30 Guilds promised their tacit support. It wasn’t anything unexpected.

“Hahoe Mask Guild is probably thankful to Hyrkan, but their inferiority complex must have been equally big. Betraying Hyrkan

and joining the Stormhunter Guild or fighting against the entire Top 30 Guilds. The choice was obvious.”

No matter how amazing Hyrkan was, he wasn't capable fight against the Top 30 Guilds by himself.

“In the end, Hyrkan was too amazing for his own good. That's why he was betrayed from Warlord.”

Shunned by the whole world, Hyrkan was left with no choice but to quit Warlord.

Of course, all this...

“I can't believe this is happening to me.”

Hasn't happened as of now.

“I returned to the past...”

An Jaehyun, he returned to 2036.

With all his memories intact!

Chapter 4. A Class You Can Play Alone (2)

Most men fell into a bit of narcissism, looking at themselves in the mirror after showers. It was a strange, unfortunate, and rather sad habit of the male species.

But An Jaehyun detested looking at mirrors. He didn't have any particularly handsome feature, and he couldn't even look at the mirror without his thick glasses.

But at the moment, An Jaehyun was staring into the mirror with a big smile on his face.

It wasn't an ordinary smile.

Grin!

It was a refreshing smile. It may look odd to others, but An Jaehyun was doing his best to make his smile look as clear as possible. Looking into the mirror, An Jaehyun spoke to himself.

"You unlucky bastard," he criticized himself.

But while criticizing himself, An Jaehyun didn't lose the smile on his face. In fact, he made an even happier smile.

'Yep, you really had an unlucky life.'

An Jaehyun once again recalled the last moment of his life.

It was a car accident. After he bought a lottery ticket, he resolved his mind for a new start. That was when a truck hit the bus station and crushed An Jaehyun with it. He couldn't even feel any pain as he died instantaneously. He was thinking 'Ah!' as he was hit, and when he opened his eyes again, he was back in January 1st, 2036.

'I knew I was unlucky, but come on, a car accident? Just how unlucky was I?'

It was a time when vehicles had built-in autonomous navigation system designed specifically to prevent car accidents. It goes without saying that An Jaehyun was extremely unlucky to have died from a car accident.

But as of now, his unlucky life had never happened.

'Yep, you lived one really unlucky life.'

"So it's time to live a lucky one."

He had returned to the past.

There was no penalty. His memory, body, and thought process were all perfectly fine. He was disappointed that he didn't gain a superpower, but he was nonetheless satisfied. What was so important was that something that would only happen in movies and novels happened to him. It meant that he became a main

character, since obviously a side character wouldn't be sent back in time.

An Jaehyun didn't think too much into his situation.

It was a common cliché. An Jaehyun didn't stop to think whether he was dreaming, or whether he had been dreaming a long dream all this time. He also didn't think about the butterfly effect his return would have on the world. He found it useless to bother with anything that wouldn't make him money.

There was only one important thing to him right now.

‘I'll hit it big with Warlord this time.’

Just that.

He knew Warlord was the only way for him to change his miserable life. An Jaehyun in real life was a dispensable, minimum-wage slave, but in Warlord, he was the Hero Slaughterer, a character worth an immense amount of money and capable of slaying any foolish challengers.

In other words, what was important to An Jaehyun were the tools he needed to achieve success.

‘The date is January 1st.’

He needed to first understand the situation.

The current date was January 1st, 2036, 1:22 P.M. to be exact.

‘If you were going to send me back, why not a year more...’

Unfortunately, Warlord had already begun its service 10 months ago.

If An Jaehyun had gone back one more year like he wished, he wouldn't have any big concerns.

In any case, he had to face the current situation. Truthfully, he was thankful. Wishing for more would be too greedy.

‘The gap is huge.’

10 months weren't a small difference. In fact, it was anything but small.

Warlord released its top 100 rankings weekly, but rankers didn't refer to just these top 100. Although true rankers were those on this list, one could be called a ranker if one's level was above a certain standard based on the top 100 rankers.

The competition was fierce within the top ranking players. Only the names of top 100 rankers were displayed, and the money one could get from contracts by being a top 100 ranker were vastly

different. Warlord's rule of thumb was that every time the front digit of a rank changed, the front digit of a contract payment changed.

Anyways, what was important was that almost all rankers started playing within the first one month of service.

'5 months was it? Super Rookie Myojyo, I think he started the latest out of the rankers.'

In this area, a Polish player called Myojyo made a name for himself.

He started Warlord exactly 144 days after its launch and managed to enter the top 100 in 2038, on Warlord's 4th year of service.

This meant it took him close to 3 years to bridge the gap with the Starters.

Myojyo's play time was freakishly high as well. Most rankers played about 100 hours per week. The Rule of 100. The standard was to invest 100 hours to playing every week. 110 hours meant a 10% higher result, 90 hours meant a 10% lower result. This was Warlord's Rule of 100.

In Myojyo's case, his average weekly play time was 130 hours. Normal people weren't able to play for so long. Warlord required high amount of concentration, and loss of concentration meant death. In addition, death meant 48 hours of downtime. It was

clearly better to sleep 8 hours for a good rest than getting 6 hours of sleep and dying because of it. Regardless, Myojyo managed to reach the top 100, and he was given the nickname Super Rookie.

But what if there was a difference of 10 months?

‘I don’t know about the titles that have already come out, but I know all the titles that will come out in the future. If I can monopolize them, I can cover this gap.’

It would normally be impossible to bridge such a gap.

But it was possible for An Jaehyun, who returned to the past with all his memories.

Warlord has a title system. If a player achieved something no other players had, or if the player was the first to discover something, or if the player accomplished a monumental feat, he was given titles. They had a simple function – to permanently raise the player’s stats.

It was a system for those in lead.

In most games, the ones who started later had more advantage, at least in terms of time efficiency. They just had to pick and follow a path other had toiled through. It was fair for the pioneers to receive some benefit, and that benefit was the title system.

There were no information on titles whatsoever. Players had to

find them out for themselves by playing the game.

However, the current An Jaehyun was full of title-related knowledge.

He also knew the best hunting grounds and the method for hunting certain monsters. These were among the many weapons at An Jaehyun's disposal.

It wasn't easy to bridge a 10 month gap, but it wasn't impossible for An Jaehyun.

‘I'll just have to work hard.’

There was one more problem.

‘What's important to me now is money.’

An Jaehyun remembered 2036 very well. It was the year he was fired from the factory he worked in for no clear reason, and was close to running low on the money he had saved up.

‘I probably have 2, 3 million at best.’

One needed at least 7 million won to start Warlord.

‘I need to borrow 5 million somehow...’

To play Warlord, one needed Peach Corp's virtual reality device, V-Gear. Unfortunately for An Jaehyun, the cheapest Level 1 Model's exact cost was 20,990,000 won.

It was expensive.

It was the cost of a small car. It wasn't a small amount, but it couldn't be considered too expensive for what it was worth. V-Gear was the key to accessing the virtual world.

There was, of course, no need to pay all at once. There were monthly installment plans just like for real cars. For V-Gears, 12 months was the max, and one had to make a down payment for the first three months, which was about 5 million won.

There was also the cost of creating a Warlord character. Upon creation, one could play free for the first 3 months, but other extraneous costs amounted to another 2 million won. This cost couldn't be paid on credit.

All this amounted to about 7 million won.

Taking into account the currently saved up money, An Jaehyun still needed 5 million more.

'There's no way my credit card can handle that much, and I probably can't loan that much from the bank. If I take out the deposit for this one-room apartment and live on the streets with

just my V-Gear... no, that would be just asking to be robbed.'

An Jaehyun already knew the answer to this problem.

'Looks like I'll have to go to those loan sharks.'

Private loans.

An Jaehyun hated the loan sharks as much as anyone else, but he knew it was the only way to borrow such a large amount of money. It would be akin to putting himself on shackles, but obtaining 5 million won by honest work would take 3 to 4 months, and that would be no different than cutting off his own legs.

'Assuming I'm okay with money, what's my plan now?'

His next worry was about his future plans.

Warlord's main content was monster raids. It was also the most lucrative content.

However, monster raids were designed for cooperative plays.

An Jaehyun knew for sure that Hyrkan would never be able to solo a raid. Although Hyrkan was strong, it was impossible for him to solo a raid. It was because Hyrkan was a swordsman. Swordsmen were front-liners, and their job was to charge into the enemy and make way for his team.

Additionally, raids required various chemical reactions from different classes. If a monster reacted to a specific magic, it was the players' job to take advantage of the fact and find its weakness. Only a very small minority relied on brute force to fight.

‘Damn.’

In the first place, this way of thinking was completely irrational.

An Jaehyun had amazing personal skills and now the knowledge of the future. Using the two, he could easily enter any of the Top 30 Guilds' Esquire groups. Esquire groups contained prospective, back-up players for the Top 30 Guilds, and they received the full backing of their guilds.

If a player distinguished himself somehow, he was promoted to a regular member. At that point, wealth and fame naturally followed. All he had to do was cooperate with the guild's decisions.

‘Fuck.’

But An Jaehyun denied such rational way of thinking.

He didn't care about what the rational thing to do was.

‘Like I'll ever work under those fuckers.’

Just because An Jaehyun threatened to overtake their positions,

those rich pigs had ruined An Jaehyun's life. As a result, An Jaehyun was forced to quit Warlord with nothing but bitterness and anger left in him. An Jaehyun would never forget the persecution, humiliation, and hardships he faced after the Hahoe Mask Guild betrayed him. It's nothing to brag about, but he even considered committing suicide.

Of course, none of this had happened in present time, but those memories were etched onto An Jaehyun's mind.

Join their guild and become their dog?

Maybe he would if he really were a dog.

But An Jaehyun wasn't a dog. He was human. And his human values wouldn't let him accept such a thing.

'A class that can do solo raids... a class you can play alone.'

An Jaehyun racked his brain.

'Does Warlord have a class that can do everything by itself?'

To An Jaehyun anguishing over this question,

'Ah!'

A light bulb went off.

“Rich Lich.”

There was one.

While everyone was fighting fearsome monsters as a guild, there was one person who succeeded in soloing a raid.

His nickname, Rich Lich.

“There was that guy!”

His class, necromancer.

Chapter 5. A Class You Can Play Alone (3)

Warlord has many classes to choose from.

To elaborate, players of the same class could form highly individualistic characters depending on the skill tree and stat distribution.

Even so, there were popular classes and unpopular classes. It was a matter of fact for RPG games.

In Warlord, necromancer was an unpopular class.

The class itself wasn't bad. They could apply curses, summon undead monsters and golems, and use attack spells like other magicians. They could even modify their own body and increase their combat strength. In a way, it was the ultimate all-around class.

The problem was that it was near impossible to simultaneously acquire high-ranking skills in all these aspects.

Warlord had a skill tree system. To obtain a high-rank skill, one needs a high-rank skill book and its low-rank skill to achieve a certain rank. There were many ways to raise a skill's rank, but the most common way was to use it repeatedly.

Naturally, to obtain skills of different variety, one had to use lower-rank skills of different variety. If a player took his time

doing so as a hobby, it wouldn't be impossible.

But because players needed to show results quicker than their competitors, most opted for efficiency rather than enjoyment. As such, it made sense that the necromancer class would be unpopular. It was also the reason Starters didn't give much thought to necromancers. If they became necromancers, they could enjoy the game, but they wouldn't be able to surpass their competitors.

In addition, necromancers weren't all that useful in the main content of Warlord – raids. Standard magicians could cover most of what necromancers could do. They had stronger attack spells than necromancers. Curse magic is a type of debuff magic, but it isn't the only debuff magic.

Most importantly, necromancers could only use a single attribute magic. This penalty was huge for rankers that had to kill higher level monsters. Players could deal more than two times the damage depending on the attribute compatibility, but necromancers didn't have such advantage.

Summoning magic was even more complicated. First, they required a lot of money. Necromancers summoned using cores that were made using materials dropped from monsters. There were other ways to summon, but cores made summons far more powerful. Unfortunately, these cores were expensive. Top level players typically spent several million won for a single item, and cores costed about the same amount. It would be fine for one or two summons, but some necromancers controlled close to 100 summons.

This was fine if it was one big investment, but necromancers had to change their cores as they leveled up.

There was another problem. Summons were unappealing. Moving skeletons gave off a totally different feeling in the virtual world than on PC screens. If the summons were ghouls or zombies... it was simply too disgusting. A very small minority might enjoy something like it, but even they wouldn't admit that it's a normal hobby.

Even so, there was one player that reached the top 100 rankings as a necromancer.

His username was Himala, and his nickname, Rich Lich.

As one can expect, he was extremely rich in real life.

His real name was Subrata Duta. He was a 33 year old multi-millionaire, who struck rich with a single app. His hobby was gaming, and he was the type of pervert that enjoyed crushing others through money.

Sadly, his money didn't help him in Warlord. He had no talent for VR games. Even if he equipped himself with the best items, he was just food to PKers who wanted his item. It was no different than a beginner driving a Lamborghini. In fact, because he had good items, he was often PKed by other players.

At one point, he gave up going into battle himself. He became a necromancer and made his summons battle. It didn't matter to him how much money it cost.

When he successfully solo killed Queen Blaze Ant, a level 250 elite monster, people started seeing necromancers in a different light. This was also when he was given the nickname Rich Lich.

But necromancers never became popular. They required the biggest investment of all the available classes and were difficult to raise. Plus, when players started to reevaluate the necromancer class, Warlord's raid system was close to being perfected without necromancers. It was out of the question for top ranking players to give up their characters and restart as necromancers. They weren't willing to change their raid strategies for the sake of necromancers either.

This was why An Jaehyun was conflicted.

‘It's possible.’

Want to do everything alone?

Then the necromancer class was the answer. Necromancers weren't weak in battle either. They could make themselves into the undead and modify their own bodies. Their combat power wasn't particularly higher than that of other classes, but An Jaehyun was always able to win against rankers with better equipment and higher stats. He just had to meet certain standards.

Money was a problem, but if he monopolized the profit from killing monsters, it wasn't impossible. He could earn as much as he used.

He had only one concern.

'It's possible... but if I fail, I'm done for.'

It was the possibility of failure.

There was enough information about necromancers, but if his plans failed and he couldn't achieve the results he desired, he would be in dire straits.

He didn't think he could return to the past again.

If he failed, he had to change his mind. He had to throw away his pride, borrow a dog's, and bark under someone's legs.

If he failed, it was over.

But what if he succeeded?

What if he could really do everything by himself as a necromancer?

He would be able to place everyone under his feet. That was the

case with Rich Lich. He fought with entire guilds alone. He couldn't fight the Top 30 Guilds, but he was able to crush ordinary guilds by himself. In a simple 1v1, only a handful of rankers were able to beat him.

Rich Lich's battle skills were atrocious, but what if he had An Jaehyun's battle skills? He might have changed Warlord's history.

‘Yeah, I have to change history.’

An Jaehyun had no use for the history he knew. What he wanted was a new history centered around himself.

Most importantly, An Jaehyun was confident. That if he became famous enough, the Top 30 Guilds would try to eliminate him again. He knew that if anyone threatened them, those fat pigs turned into boars and charged at their target.

An Jaehyun had to fight against them.

In a way, this was most important to him.

‘Alright.’

He made his decision.

“Time to go borrow some money.”



An Jaehyun's first contact with Warlord was through a workshop part-time job. Warlord was a game for the rich. Many didn't have the time or were too lazy to farm for levels, skills, or items. Of course, if they could pay for them, they would happily do so.

Workshops were created for this reason, and part-time workers were hired. Since one couldn't use bots like in PC games, one could only hire actual people.

An Jaehyun found his talent in this part-time job. He saved up money and started Warlord about three months after.

Of course, An Jaehyun now had no intention of wasting three months.

The solution to his money problem was private loans.

Private loans weren't illegal, but as one might expect, people who deal with money think in strange ways.

Used V-Gears sold for a high price. As long as it worked, it would sell for 80% of the original cost. So private lenders often lent money with V-Gears as conditions. That way, they wouldn't lose too much money.

People who borrowed money to buy V-Gears were those looking

for a way to earn money. No one borrowed money just so they could enjoy playing VR games. As for the remaining money they owned, it could be paid back as referral fees to workshops.

This was called the V-Gear loan.

When An Jaehyun was working part-time in workshops, he saw many who couldn't pay back their V-Gear loan and came to work in workshops. As much as he worked for these people, he knew where to find them.

As a result, An Jaehyun found himself drinking coffee in a private loan company an hour after he made his decision.

“You’re here to borrow money to buy a V-Gear, correct?”

“Yes.”

At An Jaehyun’s response, the loaner, Park Wuyoung, glanced over him from head to toe.

‘He doesn’t look like anyone special.’

To Park Wuyoung, it was important to know how to categorize their customers.

Even if they could get back most of their money, a loss was still a loss. At the same time, there were other things to watch out for.

How much money could he rip off apart from the amount he lent? Customers who paid back the amount they owed were good, but even better customers were those who could never pay back the amount they owed and only paid back the interest.

To the loaner's eyes, An Jaehyun was the latter.

He looked like a nobody. With all the news of money in Warlord, there were more people of this sort every day. They were the type to think they could become heroes, like the people they saw on Warlord videos. They were the type to think they may have talent in gaming.

Many of them were especially those running away from reality.

To Park Wuyoung, An Jaehyun was exactly that type.

‘Well, there’s no reason not to.’

Of course, there was no reason for Park Wuyoung to let the man in front of him borrow. He could easily get his money back.

“Alright, but understand that the interest is high. It will be 29.9%.”

To Park Wuyoung, it was laughable.

Park Wuyoung was certain. In 3 months, after his free trial period was over, An Jaehyun will come running back to him. With no way to pay back the money he owed, he will cry his eyes out as he begs on his feet.

“How much are you looking to borrow?”

Knowing this, Park Wuyoung smiled on the outside, but sneered inside.

An Jaehyun calmly replied to Park Wuyoung’s smile.

“10 million won.”

“Excuse me?”

It was higher than he had expected. He knew 7 million was enough to buy a V-Gear and play Warlord for 3 months.

But he’s borrowing 3 million more?

To Park Wuyoung’s surprise, An Jaehyun kept his calm and replied,

“If I can’t pay it back, introduce me to a workshop. Even if I have to work like a dog, I’ll pay you back.”

Park Wuyoung couldn't answer for a moment.

At Park Wuyoung's silence, An Jaehyun snapped his finger twice.

“Excuse me, but I'm a bit busy right now. Can I get the money or not?”

An Jaehyun knew the man thought nothing of him. He was used to the way the man looked at him. Although he didn't feel good, he could care less about it at the moment.

So An Jaehyun let his displeasure show on his face, but still asked with a calm voice.

In response, Park Wuyoung fixed his attitude.

“We can, of course, but you will also have to put in your one-room deposit as guarantee.”

“Done. Alright, let's hurry up.”

Before Park Wuyoung had the chance, An Jaehyun grabbed the contract on top of the table and started reading it like it was his. Then, without listening to any explanations, he filled in the blank space with the amount he wanted, then stamped it with his legal seal.

Afterwards, he turned the contract around and handed it back to

Park Wuyoung, saying,

“Stamp it.”

Chapter 6. Secret Of The Expert (1)

“Gotta love the private loaners. They sure work fast if money is involved.”

Drrk, drrrk!

An Jaehyun fiddled with the dial on his watch. He checked his bank account and saw the 10 million won he borrowed. Then, he fiddled with the dial again before lifting his watch towards his mouth.

“Peach Store.”

Since the money was in, he knew where he had to go.

The Peach Store.

It controlled over 70% of the VR market, and contained the VR devices needed to access the virtual world. It was also where one could create his Warlord character. Peach Corp, of course, was in a partnership with Tobot Soft. Since Warlord’s launch, more than half of V-Gear buyers were looking to play Warlord. Since Warlord’s sales skyrocketed V-Gear sales, it was obvious that Peach Corp would give Warlord special treatment.

At the Peach Store, one could take care of everything needed to access Warlord.

‘Alright.’

After looking up its location, An Jaehyun placed a small earphone over his left ear.

-Navigation started.



When the household virtual reality device, V-Gear Level 1 Model, appeared for the first time, the world called it a revolution.

But it wasn't a revolution for most people.

“Who the hell would buy a gaming console for 20 million won?”

It was truly revolutionary for VR devices worth several hundreds of millions to be reduced to 20 million, but the price was still exorbitant. Instead of trying to lower the cost, Peach Corp took a different approach in solving this problem.

You aren't paying for a new toy, but a new era!

That was Peach Corp's slogan, and Peach Corp took great effort in creating the Peach Store.

It was different from an ordinary store. Its peach-shaped building

and its sleek and fancy walls were unique to the Peach Store. Its interior was even more astounding.

Inside the Peach Store, one had unlimited access to any V-Gear related content.

Enjoy as much as you want, then buy it! This was their motto.

This unlimited access applied for all 24 hours of the day. They were open 24/7, and Peach Stores allowed their customers to freely try out the V-Gear. There were some who made their Warlord characters and played exclusively inside the Peach Stores!

When An Jaehyun visited the Peach Store for the first time in quite a while, he naturally found himself looking around for any changes. He saw other customers seated on comfy chairs, wearing huge gloves and thick helmets slightly bigger than motorcycle helmets. They were obviously customers enjoying the VR world.

At this time, an employee walked up to An Jaehyun.

“Can I help you?”

At the employee’s pleasant smile, An Jaehyun immediately replied,

“I’m here to buy the Level 1 model V-Gear. I’m ready to form the contract, so lead the way.”

Because of An Jaehyun's hasty reply, the employee thought he was the impatient type. The employee asked An Jaehyun a question according to his manual.

“Have you used a V-Gear before?”

An Jaehyun stopped to think.

‘Not at this point.’

Before he returned to the past, An Jaehyun even showed symptoms of neck disc from wearing V-Gear too much, but all that has yet to happen in the current time. The An Jaehyun now had never used a V-Gear before.

“No, I haven't.”

“Then I recommend you try one out before purchasing it. As you know, some people feel dizzy or show signs of motion sickness with V-Gears.”

“I'll just buy it right away.”

If An Jaehyun showed such symptoms, he wouldn't have come back to the past in the first place.

The employee led An Jaehyun to buy a V-Gear. As he walked, An

Jaehyun noticed something from the corner of his eyes, and he stopped.

“Wait.”

“Yes?”

“Isn’t that a Level 6S? Is that on sale?”

An Jaehyun could see an emerald-colored V-Gear, unlike the normal white colored ones, as well as two programmers testing it.

‘That’s definitely a Level 6, and an S-Level to boot. Didn’t that go on sale around the end of 2036?’

Level 1 was the most basic model for V-Gears, and every subsequent level indicated a higher model. Higher models showed better VR performances, as better equipment showed better results. The difference wasn’t too big. The general consensus was that there was about a 2% difference for every 1 level.

But this 2% was nothing to scoff at, especially if it accumulated. A 2% difference in one’s stats was a huge difference. Between a Level 1 model and a Level 4 model, there was a whole 6% difference! One wouldn’t be able to find an in-game item that raised one’s stats by 6% no matter how much they paid.

Level 4 V-Gear were around 100 million won. These were used by professionals whose livelihoods depended on their performances

in Warlord. The Level 5 models could only be custom ordered, and the price skyrocketed depending on what additional options the buyer ordered. As for the Level 6 model, they weren't even on sale yet! The ones in existence should still be in there testing stage.

Plus, the emerald color indicated that it was an S-series. The 'S' stood for 'special,' and it was meant to be the one of Peach Store's fanciest V-Gears. There were only 77 of them for each level, and they boasted an astronomical price. They weren't meant for regular users or even professionals, but for rich millionaires and billionaires... the kind who bought yachts on a whim.

'That thing is so good.'

An Jaehyun had once used one of these. When An Jaehyun was making a name for himself in Warlord, he was chosen as a Level 7S tester, and he was genuinely awed. As he was still using a Level 3 model at this time, he felt as if he changed from a cheap bike to the best sports car. He could do whatever he wanted.

The programmers who received An Jaehyun's VR testing data were equally surprised. They even claimed no one could so perfectly utilize the Level 7S's capabilities as An Jaehyun.

In any case, the Level 6S was right in front of him.

An Jaehyun was naturally curious.

"Sorry, but that model is not on sale."

The employee immediately explained, to which An Jaehyun couldn't help but to laugh inside.

‘Even if I had the money to buy that, I'd probably spend it on stocks instead.’

The current An Jaehyun didn't have the capital to buy such a thing even if it was on sale. Even so, he couldn't understand why something that wasn't on sale officially would be at the Peach Store. Usually, Peach Corp directly delivered such products to the buyer's location. It wasn't something that would be on display at a store, just like how a Lamborghini wouldn't be on display at a local car store.

‘This could only mean there was a technical problem, and they hurriedly brought it here for a test.’

It was obvious that there was a problem with the machine, and technicians were on the case because of its owner's notice.

An Jaehyun was curious about its owner.

‘Someone in Korea who can buy a product that isn't even on sale yet...’

Furthermore, it was highly likely that An Jaehyun knew this owner.

‘It’s her, isn’t it?’

This owner was also the person he despised the most in the whole world.

An Jaehyun frowned.

The employee misunderstood An Jaehyun’s change in expression. Thinking it was his fault, the employee bowed his head in apology.

“We’re very sorry, but that product is...”

“Hm?”

An Jaehyun was surprised, but soon realized what the employee was thinking.

‘Peach Store employees are way too kind. It’s almost too much.’

An Jaehyun immediately relaxed his expression.

“No, I was squinting because I couldn’t see well. If you aren’t selling it, that’s that. Let’s go form the contract. Ah, I’m also making a Warlord character so take care of that as well.”

At An Jaehyun’s words, the employee began walking. As he

followed the employee, An Jaehyun turned his head once again.

‘Is this model really that bitch’s? Then I won’t feel satisfied until I spit on it or something...’

Chapter 7. Secret Of The Expert (2)

Every time An Jaehyun swiped his card, the old-style watch on his wrist vibrated.

‘The money I bet my life on is gone after just two swipes...’

To An Jaehyun, the vibration felt like the watch writhing in pain.

‘Whatever. I’ll show the world what it means to earn and spend money like a king.’

While An Jaehyun was forming a new resolution in his mind, the employee finished reading over the contract and began explaining the final procedure.

“We’ll deliver the V-Gear to your home at your convenient time. What would you like to do for the detailed settings? Would you like to do it here, or at home?”

Detailed setting.

It was the process of adjusting the V-Gear’s numerous options to match the user.

It was a rather important process, as important as tuning for instruments. The difference between having it done and not

having it done was huge. Rankers, whose lives depended on the 1 or 2% difference, were especially careful about the settings. As a result, top ranking player often did their settings on their own. Of course, it was the case for An Jaehyun as well.

“I’ll do it here.”

Even so, there was no need to do the entire setting by himself. After roughly setting it up here, An Jaehyun planned on personalizing it as he used it.

The employee nodded his head.

“I’ll call the programmer, please wait.”



A programmer, who was furiously typing on his laptop, released his hand. Connected to the laptop was an emerald-colored V-Gear.

“Shit, what’s wrong here?”

“What now?”

“There’s no error in the system no matter how many times I check. There’s nothing we can fix.”

“So what?”

“What do you mean ‘what’? It’s a tester problem, so we’ll have to call the tester.”

The other programmer couldn’t help but smirk at his colleague’s response.

“Yeah, as if the VVIP will come here. If we call her here, she’ll probably respond with ‘Who the fuck do you think I am?’ That’s if we can even reach her through the phone in the first place.”

“Well, that’s why I said shit.”

These two programmers weren’t the run-of-the-mill programmers that looked for defects in the system. They were members of Peach Corp’s Japan Branch, and also part of the research and development team under Peach Corp’s Asia Branch. They were top-level VR programmers who participated in the development of the Level 6 model, and their salaries were easily in the several hundred millions.

The fact that they had come to Korea in a single day and became repair technicians could only mean that this VVIP held an incredibly important position, enough to easily turn top-level VR programmers into mere repair technicians.

It went without saying that the two programmers were incredibly frustrated at the whole situation.

They graduated from prestigious schools, found work in their field's biggest business, and received the best treatment from others. It was probably their first time being treated as they were today.

But what choice did they have? As long as they were getting paid, they had to listen to the higher up's orders.

“Let's start from the beginning. What was her complaint?”

“After the Climbing Test, she said her body felt sluggish and that her reaction time was a tempo off.”

“The reaction time being off just means the VR physical ability has a slow reception time. As for her body feeling sluggish... I can only think it's her being unable to adapt.”

At that moment, An Jaehyun came up to them along with the programmer to do his settings. It was as An Jaehyun intended. To take a closer look at the 6S model, An Jaehyun led his programmer next to them.

As a result, An Jaehyun was able to overhear their conversation.

“This is the 6S model, right?”

An Jaehyun immediately asked. The two programmers only just

noticed that An Jaehyun had walked up to them, and they couldn't hide their surprised faces.

“Yes?”

“How did you know?”

They had no choice but to be surprised. The 6S model was still in testing, and most people didn't know the Level 6 model even existed. It would be a different story for specialists of the field, but it was clear that An Jaehyun wasn't one.

“It is, right?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Then it should be a test model. What is a test model doing here? Is there a problem?”

“It's because the tester said her body felt sluggish...”

At that instant, the other programmer glared at the programmer who had just answered An Jaehyun's question.

‘Hey! What are you telling him that for?!’ was what his eyes were saying. Noticing the man's gaze, the programmer in question shut his mouth, realizing his mistake. On the other hand, An Jaehyun was completely unconcerned at the two programmers exchanging

glances, as he placed his thought on what the man had just said.

“If the body feels sluggish, it’s probably because of the Sensory System.”

Extended Sensory System.

It was a new system introduced in the Level 6 model.

It expanded the sensory limits a human could feel in the virtual world, and Warlord players often called it the sixth sense. It was a good system, but it was also a double-edged sword. One’s sensory limits being expanded meant the user had to intake more information. If one received more information than they could handle, the process could only feel sluggish.

The point was to adapt to it. If one couldn’t adapt, it meant that the person had no talent in using the Extended Sensory System, at which point it was better to not use it at all.

“I assume the testing method is Climbing. Lower the Extended Sensory System by 50% and check the Climbing test result. Then, adjust the Extended Sensory System by raising it 5% each time. That should do it.”

The Climbing Test was the most frequently used testing method when performing a VR device setting.

The Climbing Test was rock climbing in the virtual world. It

allowed for the checking of how well and to what extent the user was utilizing his or her VR physical abilities, and how good one's sense of balance was.

Meanwhile, the two programmers stared in amazement at An Jaehyun's explanation.

“How do you know this?”

An Jaehyun didn't seem to be a professional, but his response was full of confidence. He even knew about the Extended Sensory System. This was a state-of-the-art technology only a few specialists in the field knew about. It wasn't something a clueless nobody could know.

“Is there a problem with me knowing?”

“No, but...”

“Do you perhaps have experience as a tester?”

Instead of giving an answer, An Jaehyun just shrugged his shoulders. It was a vague reply, but it was the best he could do at the moment. He did have experience, but not as of now.

Then.

“Could you please help us?”

One of the programmers asked An Jaehyun.

“Hey! What are you saying?”

The other immediately opposed it. In reality, there was nothing wrong with what he asked. They were working with a device in testing anyways. Collecting data from multiple testers would be the logical thing to do. In fact, it was unusual and illogical for someone to use a testing device as a personal device.

“Come on! We can test it ourselves all day, but it won’t help at all. Why not just get a little help?”

“You’re right, but...”

The two looked over at An Jaehyun, seemingly asking for help. To this, An Jaehyun answered without hesitation.

“Sorry, I can’t.”

‘If this is that bitch’s, no reason for me to help.’

It wasn’t like he was going to be paid for it. Plus, if it really belonged to Choi Sulyeon like he thought, he would rather die before helping his sworn enemy.

The two programmers made sullen faces, but An Jaehyun

ignored them both. An Jaehyun had no reason to pity them. Since they were handling the 6S model, it was clear they were from the main branch, they were elites that An Jaehyun didn't even have the qualifications to pity.

An Jaehyun stared back to his programmer.

“Let's go do our setting.”

The third programmer standing behind with a blank expression finally snapped out.

“An, yes.”



A lady with a model-like stature and a glamorous figure took off an emerald-colored V-Gear, exposing her long, straight hair. She looked at the programmer who helped her take off the V-Gear and nodded her head.

“I lowered the Extended Sensory System and incrementally increased it like you said, and it feels much better. It should be enough.”

Along with these words, she signaled with her eyes toward a female bodyguard next to her.

The female bodyguard began to dismantle the installed V-Gear 6S Level with extreme proficiency. It seemed like she wanted to take it with her straight away. The two programmers let out sigh of relief watching this take course.

‘Geez, she really treats us like slaves.’

‘Money sure talks...’

Choi Sulyeon grabbed her jacket from nearby and took out her wallet, then took out two blank checks.

“Good work.”

The two were surprised by both her words and the checks.

‘No way.’

They had expected about a million won, but there was an extra zero on the check they received.

Money talks? Hell yeah!

The two immediately thought of this idiom. On the other hand, Choi Sulyeon was completely ignoring the two programmers as she handed them the checks. Her business with them had ended the moment she gave them the checks, and she had no reason to keep a close relationship with either of them.

At that moment, as if she had just remembered something, she asked them a question.

At the end of the test, I noticed my time ranked second. What was the first?”

“Yes?”

The two tightly held onto the checks in their hands as they tilted their heads in question.

‘Second? What does she mean?’

‘She ranked second? As if. That time was on the level of a world-record.’

Here at the Peach Store, all V-Gears shared the same program installed to a single server, because it was impossible to install the program on individual machines due to licensing and storage space. It was the same for the Climbing Test. The rankings were of the users that tried the Climbing Test that day.

And Choi Sulyeon had just scored a record of 2 minutes and 51 seconds on the A-level test.

Most people can’t even finish the A-level test. No matter how long one takes, anyone who could complete it would be considered

good at adapting to the VR world. Furthermore, only a handful of people could finish this test under 3 minutes. Those that could were geniuses, the so called monsters.

Choi Sulyeon's record of 2 minutes and 51 seconds was incredible without doubt. She was content at surpassing her past record of 2 minutes and 58 seconds, a whole 7 second difference. She felt it was worth the effort in obtaining a 6S model.

But her record was only in second place.

She couldn't understand how. How could her monstrous record be second place?

The two programmers could only tilt their heads.

Choi Sulyeon frowned, watching the two.

"Can I see the Climbing Test rankings?"

At her order, one programmer immediately ran to his laptop. When he saw the record on the screen, his face stiffened.

"2 minutes 33 seconds..."

An absurd record was sitting on the first place. It was a time impossible for a human being to achieve.

The two immediately replied.

“Looks like it was a bot result.”

“We had a bot running to test the product. Looks like we accidentally recorded one of its times.”

It was an impossible record for a human. Then the answer was simple.

Choi Sulyeon only gave them a tired look before she turned her head away.



After returning home, An Jaehyun stretched as if stared at the V-Gear installed in his small one-room apartment.

Anyone could easily tell from his face that he was in a bad mood.

“Damn it.”

‘Was it because it’s a Level 1 model? I can’t believe my Climbing time fell to the 30s. It was well in the 20s when I was at my peak. Ugh, it must be because I haven’t played in a while.’

The Climbing Test result put An Jaehyun in a sour mood, and

kept bothering him.

He realized he was not in his best condition.

‘Necromancer or whatever, I need to first restore myself to my peak condition.’

With a frown on his face, An Jaehyun finished stretching and grabbed a handful of glucose candy he just purchased. He threw them in his mouth, and he put on the V-Gear glove with a loud chewing noise. Jelly like substance billowed inside the glove, completely immersing his hands down to each fingerprint. An Jaehyun immediately swallowed down the tiny pieces of glucose candy in his mouth.

Then he laid on the mattress and put on his V-Gear.

[User An Jaehyun, iris scan complete. Thank you for using the V-Gear.]

As soon as the iris scan finished, An Jaehyun clamped the mouthpiece inside the V-Gear helmet.

Biting down strongly, An Jaehyun prepared his mind.

‘Alright, let’s see who gets the last laugh!’

Chapter 8. Dancing With The Skeletons (1)

Virtual reality was able to become the forefront of the modern era because anything was possible inside a VR world. In the VR space, anyone could become the Hulk, Iron Man, or even Marilyn Monroe. One could blaze through the streets on a race car faster than an airplane, or jump down a cliff without a parachute.

Anything was possible.

But that didn't mean one could be good at anything.

In fact, it was hard.

Although one could do anything one wanted in the VR world, but it was hard to do it well. Jumping off a cliff? One wouldn't feel any pain, but most people weren't able to do it. If they could, there wouldn't be people crying and shaking in fear as they get trained at boot camps.

This was the biggest hurdle one had to overcome when playing virtual reality games, especially RPGs.

Virtual reality games gave players the power to beat a bear to death with just their fists, but even so, it was only possible for two or three out of every ten. The other seven or eight failed.

There were two reasons.

First, they couldn't utilize their powers. Given a car with an upper limit of 600 km per hour, most people wouldn't be able to go over 200 km per hour. Not only were they scared, but they also lacked the driving talent and experience needed to freely move around curves without crashing.

The second was their distaste for killing living creatures. To them, the virtual creatures looked no different than real, living creatures.

The first problem was something the players had to solve for themselves, but it was up to the content creators to solve the second problem. VR games creators found the need to design their games so that players could more easily focus on the game.

If blood exploded out whenever one swung his sword, or if one pierced a creature with a spear and could feel its dying heartbeats, or if the creature's organs started spilling out through a cut on their belly, or if one crushed a monster's head and its brain exploded everywhere, then the game creator would be wearing handcuffs.

As a result, the beginning of VRMMORPG games was childish to say the least. Monsters were shaped like jellies or polygons to make the game seem less violent. Some games even had candies spill out of monsters' bodies like piñatas.

But Warlord was different.

Warlord's main content involved fighting monsters, and the

game creators believed polishing this aspect to the utmost was the path to success.

Thus, they made game battles as realistic as possible.

By realistic, it meant cruel. Blood spurted, and that was it. No organs spilled out from cuts, no brains exploded out, but blood spurted out realistically. Players could always turn this option off, but the fact this option existed was game-changing.

Furthermore, when monsters got injured, they wouldn't just sit still but roar angrily. They moved to cover their injuries, and they charged at whoever gave them the injury.

This was why Warlord became the game to watch. Warlord's battle was the cruelest and most breathtaking of any other game.

Conversely, to those playing VR games for the first time, it was a challenge. There were many who couldn't adjust to the game even after paying the large sum of money to play it.

Warlord's solution to this problem was simple.

They made a very thorough tutorial. The tutorial designer is said to have said the following.

"If you don't want to play, then don't. It's not me being sarcastic, but my sincere advice. There's no reason to play this game if it's stressing. There are other games to play besides Warlord. So don't

play if you don't want to. Why spend money and force yourself to play a game?"

There was a rumor that this employee gave a written apology... in any case, new players had to go through 280 minutes of tutorials in order to start playing Warlord.

This tutorial contained many battle situations, from killing monsters to being completely destroyed by them.

Most players who go through this tutorial come out with half of their souls drained.

The same applied now.

Figur's Castle!

The Beginner's Inn, famous for its melon beer, is located in Figur's Castle.

As this was where new players started out, it was filled with newbies who just finished their tutorial. These newbies were currently sitting dispirited at the inn's tables, staring at the melon beers they received for completing the tutorial.

'What the hell.'

'Is this a game or torture...?'

‘Should I just sell my V-Gear? I don’t think I can play this game if it’s like that tutorial...’

Though they managed to pass, they had received a huge shock. They had heard about the infamous Warlord tutorial, but they didn’t think it would be that bad. Of course, their opinions had changed now that they’ve experienced it.

Most of the players were contemplating whether to continue playing Warlord or not.

At that moment, a player with a completely different demeanor appeared.

“Whoo!”

A man walked down the stairs leading to the 1st floor, stretching his arms out as if he just got in a good exercise. He had a bright expression, as if he just got off a good sweat at the sauna.

‘My body’s finally moving again.’

The man was An Jaehyun, or rather, Hyrkan.

‘It’s been a while since I’ve had a good fight. A man’s really got to see some blood every once in a while.’

To him, the tutorial served to recover some of his battle sense. At the same time, Hyrkan was feeling elated.

‘It feels like I’ve finally returned home.’

Is this how salmons felt when they came back home?

Hyrkan felt like he finally put on some clothes that fit him. As a result, he was feeling extremely delighted as he hummed and tapped his feet to the beat.

The other players, who had been debating whether to continue the game or not, stared at Hyrkan as if it was the most absurd thing they had ever seen.

‘Who the hell is he?’

‘Is he crazy?’

‘He’s humming? He’s clearly a newbie with those clothes, so how can he be humming?’

They would not normally pay attention to others, but they had just come out of five hours of long torturous battles. To them, Hyrkan simply looked... mad.

On the other hand, Hyrkan paid no mind to them. He didn’t even put them in his thought.

He simply didn't care.

At that moment, the Beginner's Inn's NPC owner spoke to Hyrkan.

“Good work. It's nothing big, but here's some beer for your troubles. Drink it.”

[You completed the tutorial magnificently. You received a 1000cc Melon Beer as your reward.]

As a woman's pleasing voice flowed into his ear, the NPC gave Hyrkan a glass of beer. It was better described as a jug, which Hyrkan chose to chug down his throat.

“Kya!”

‘Haven't had this in a while!’

As the beer flowed down his throat, its melon scent and special sweetness cleared Hyrkan's throat while making his mouth fresh.

‘Come to think of it, the last time I drank a melon beer was... it was before I fought with those Stormhunter fuckers, so it's been years, huh?’

The melon beer was a delicacy one could only taste in the VR

world. It was made in partnership with the number one VR gourmet content creator, Beautiful Taste. Warlord's gourmet content was as popular as its battle content, since never before seen flavor could be created in VR worlds.

“Kaa!”

After chugging down the 1000cc beer, Hyrkan stepped out of the Beginner's Inn without a hint of hesitation, and bright sunlight greeted him.

‘I'm back!’

The Hero Slaughterer Hyrkan, has come back to Warlord.



[Hyrkan]

-Level 1

-Class: Beginner

-Title Count: 1

-Stats: Strength (3) Stamina (3) Intelligence (3) / Magic (3)

Hyrkan stared at the note-sized hologram above his watch.

Staring at his status window, he felt conflicted.

These four weren't the only stats. If one researched deeper, one would find many more detailed stats. There were over ten different kinds of attribute resistances, physical and magical defenses, bonus movement speeds, and much more... It goes without saying that Warlord players, especially rankers, enjoyed having lots of numbers. If they got their numbers high enough, they felt happy just looking at them.

Of course, Hyrkan was no different.

But looking at the abysmal numbers in front of his eyes, his stomach felt empty.

‘I have a lot of grinding to do...’

His first task was to fill up his status window with numbers.

However, he had something to do before then.

‘Alright, time to go get my class.’

It was obtaining his class.

It wasn't hard.

Warlord was a hard game with a complicated battle system. If the battle preparation was hard as well, then no one would play the game.

Because of this, battle preparation was exceedingly easy compared to the actual battle.

Class selection was a prime example.

Most games had a complicated class selection process. They required players to reach a certain level, run long pre-requisite quests, or make you travel far away.

But in Warlord, there was a Class Tower about 10 minutes away from the Beginner's Inn. Swordsman, priest, and magician were the three classes over 90% of Warlord players chose. They didn't care too much as their play style varied significantly depending on how they developed their skill tree.

The necromancer Hyrkan wanted was a magician.

'Become a magician and choose dark magic as my first magic.'

When players chose the magician class, they were given a choice.

Black magic or white magic.

If one chose black magic, he became a black magician. If a black magician went down the necromancer skill tree, he would be called a necromancer.

At the same time, level 1 players could learn a magic or a skill after selecting their class. In other words, one could use magic starting from level 1.

The game didn't irritate players by making them do annoying quests before going into battle. The game creators knew players would go crazy by themselves once they got into fights.

‘What should I choose?’

There were many options to choose from after choosing black magic.

Most chose an attack type magic. Players chose the magician class for that purpose and level 1 attack type magic was still useful later in the game.

The problem was that players had to raise low-level skill's rank to prepare for high-level skills later on in the game. It was annoying to grind low-level skill ranks when one became higher level, as it was annoying and time-consuming. The best way to raise a skill's rank was repeatedly using the skill against monsters near the player's level.

Advancing in both skill rank and player level.

It was the best method of raising skill ranks.

‘Summon Skeleton.’

The most basic of the necromancer skill tree was the Summon Skeleton skill.

If one's Summon Skeleton skill rank was low, he wouldn't be able to learn higher-tier skills.

The answer was obvious.

‘I wonder how well these skeletons can satisfy me.’

Chapter 09. Dancing With The Skeletons (2)

Class Tower.

It was the place to obtain the basic classes, and also the place to periodically obtain information on skill books. At the same time, it was a meeting point where players who shared the same class gathered.

As a result, no matter which castle one visited, the Class Tower would be surrounded by many people.

As always, greed lurked around a place filled with people.

There were people with different purposes near Class Towers. The most prevalent were scouts.

“We’re recruiting fire or ice-attributed magicians!”

“Aran Guild is recruiting curse magicians. We’ll fully support you to level 50.”

Scouts near Class Towers all had the purpose of recruiting new players.

Warlord was an immensely popular game. Within a year after its launch in 2035, over a million players had joined, and the number was growing by thousands every day.

However, Warlord also had a lot of manpower shortages. Many often said there weren't enough people.

The biggest reason for this was that there weren't any casual players. Gamers were usually distinguished as being either hardcore or casual. This was because most games were free-to-play, and players could pay money to obtain advantages. But Warlord wasn't free-to-play. It wasn't even cheap enough for someone to try the game on a whim.

So most players started Warlord with a clear aim. In other words, they had plans of their own. Even if one tried to recruit others, most were already part of a group.

Another problem was that players needed auxiliary help to participate in Warlord's main content – raids. Magicians were especially sought after in this aspect. Magicians could receive up to a 200% damage advantage depending on their magic attribute compatibility. They could also receive an equivalent penalty if their magic attribute was incompatible. Because of this, it was important to recruit skilled magicians of different attributes.

Obviously, it was extremely difficult to recruit skilled, well-known, and high-leveled magicians.

If you couldn't recruit one, you just had to make one!

It was much more efficient to recruit new players and raise them to be the type of magicians one wanted. Of course, even if one touts

on the street to recruit newbies, often one wouldn't be successful. Even so, it was much better than posting some recruitment post on an online forum. It made sense that talking directly in game would show more results.

However, after being unsuccessful for a long time, there were those who became frustrated.

Those who already had decent levels and played for some time didn't like being so subservient just to recruit newbies who had just started playing.

Thus, sometimes things got a little rough.

“Hey, you! Wait a moment!”

Now was such a case.

A player who had been recruiting guild members suddenly called out and grabbed the left wrist of a player about to enter the Magician's Tower. He held the player's wrist tightly to prevent him from getting away.

“You're a new player, right? Hear me out for a bit.”

Saying this, a player named Suduri stared at the newbie in front of him.

The newbie's appearance wasn't anything special, but Suduri had a gut feeling the moment he saw him. A feeling that said, 'this guy's a loser!'

'This guy is definitely a loser. If I don't at least bring him back, that guild master fucker will throw another tantrum.'

Suduri's guild master was his high school senior, who dragged him around like he was his underling. After hearing the money involved in Warlord, he bought a V-Gear and brought his so-called underlings to make a guild.

It went without saying that there weren't many in the guild. There were less than ten people. The guild master ordered Suduri to go find new recruits unless he wants to be beaten up. Suduri wouldn't mind if it was just an online threat, but he was often punched when they met in the real world for a drink.

So to Suduri, anyone was fine. Since he found a loser who seemed to be a pushover, he planned on making him forcefully join his guild.

On the other hand, Hyrkan who became his target sneered at the rat-looking man in front of him.

'He probably thinks I look like a loser.'

To Hyrkan, this wasn't the first time this had happened. As such, he could easily figure out what this man was thinking. He had been

treated like a loser so much his whole life, that he had more or less grown used to it.

Of course, things were a bit different in Warlord. After he gained some reputation and skill, he beheaded everyone who treated him like a loser and fed their heads to tiger-type monsters nearby. He showed them who the real loser was.

Such a thing wasn't possible for the level 1 Hyrkan now.

Hyrkan stared at the man.

“What do you want?”

“You're going to be a magician, right? We'll support you, so come to our guild.”

Even as he said this, the man refused to let go of Hyrkan's wrist. There was no way Hyrkan wouldn't know what his real intention was.

‘Does he take me for a fool?’

In this situation, Hyrkan smiled lightly instead of frowning in displeasure. Seeing his smile, Suduri immediately continued.

“It's fine no matter what attribute you go for. We'll properly support you, just you specially. Not everyone can enter our guild,

you know? It's only for the select few."

The man started spewing nonsense like how Hyrkan had a kind looking face or that his ancestors must have been men of virtue. At this stupidity, Hyrkan asked him a quick question.

"You said any attribute is fine?"

"Of course!"

"Even black magic?"

"Hm?"

At this, Suduri hesitated for the first time. Over 90 percent of magicians chose white magic, as it had the most diverse options in terms of magic attributes. On the other hand, black magic skill trees were all categorized into a single attribute.

"Are you looking to be a curse magician?"

Among those choosing black magic, almost all went down the curse skill tree.

Debuff magic had many varieties. Black magician's debuff magic had a single attribute, which was its advantage. Although they weren't particularly advantageous in terms of attribute compatibility, they weren't disadvantageous either. This meant

one could expect average results no matter what monster one faced. As mid and small sized guilds couldn't afford to acquire debuff magicians of various attributes, many covered their needs with curse magic.

However, curse magicians weren't popular as they couldn't do anything by themselves. As was the case in all games, it wasn't much fun to stay in the back casting buffs without actually participating in the battle.

“That's great! If you want to be a curse magician, you'll need support for sure.”

It wasn't bad at all.

In fact, Suduri felt like he struck it rich with this loser. But as Suduri was thinking this, Hyrkan said to him,

“I'm not planning on being a curse magician. I'm going to be a necromancer.”

“What?”

Hearing this, Suduri loosened the grip on Hyrkan's wrist.

‘So he wasn't a loser, but a pervert...’

He wants to be a necromancer? I didn't think this loser would be

one of those rare perverts.

Meanwhile, after seeing that Suduri had loosened his grip, Hyrkan pulled his arm back with a snap. It seemed Suduri didn't plan on holding Hyrkan's wrist again, as he just stared at him.

“You still want to support me?”

Instead of replying, Suduri turned his head and spat. He was telling Hyrkan to fuck off.

Seeing this, Hyrkan whispered.

“Next time I see you...”

“What?”

It was soft enough that Suduri couldn't hear him. Suduri responded to the sound but Hyrkan had already entered the tower after finishing what he had to say.

Hyrkan's words.

‘... If you hold my left wrist again, I'll kill you.’

It was his final warning.



In Warlord, the best way to differentiate between NPCs and players was to look at their left wrists. Players were wearing their smart watches on their left wrists. This smart watch had various functions. Players could check their stats, confirmed quests, check maps and their physical data, communicate within and outside the VR world, take pictures or film videos, and quick-slot change their equipment.

Players couldn't take off their watches. The only way to take them off was to cut off their wrists, or when they died. In other hands, players left behind their watches when they died in-game. If others picked up these left behind watches, they could turn them into dealers located in each castle and town. In return, they received one random item from the watch.

Thus, PKers often aimed for their opponents' wrists first. If they could just cut off their wrists, they wouldn't be able to switch items using quick-slot, and the PKers could just run.

In some cases, PKers threatened their victims to leave their wrists in return for their lives. This felt the worst, as players couldn't use the functionalities of the watch before they restored their wrists. They wouldn't be able to pick up even if someone called them from the outside. Most just chose to log-out and wait for the situation to sort itself out. People called this time period the cigarette-time or the sage-time. Anyhow, it felt like shit. People often wondered why they paid so much money to play Warlord. Make that always.

As a result, players who were PKed a lot were sensitive to anyone

touching their left wrists.

‘I’m remembering some bad memories thanks to some nobody.’

In this aspect, Hyrkan was sensitive to the point of hysteria. Since his left wrist was gripped, he was in a terrible mood.

‘I have remembered your face.’

And in this aspect, Hyrkan showed his extreme temperament.

He’ll let it go the first time, but there will be no second.

‘Next time this happens, I’ll destroy you regardless of what your level is.’

Huu!

After taking a deep breath and calming himself, Hyrkan headed straight to the NPC on the 1st floor. Like in bank windows, 2 NPCs sat facing the players. What was interesting was that there was a long line for one of the NPCs, while there was only one in the line for the other.

The long line was for players trying to learn white magic, and the shorter line was obviously for black magic.

It was easy to see the difference between white magic and black magic. If it wasn't this bad, Suduri wouldn't have spat in disgust at the necromancer-aspiring loser.

In fact, the people in line for white magic saw Hyrkan walking towards black magic and showed looks of pity. It was as if they were looking at a man walking to his death.

Under their pitying looks, Hyrkan faced the NPC. It was a dark-faced old man with shriveled skin. The NPC spoke, facing Hyrkan.

“I am black magician Golco. Are you interested in black magic?”

[A class-related quest has begun.]

[After choosing a class, there is no turning back.]

[To switch from black magic to white magic, a tremendous price must be paid.]

System alerts filled Hyrkan's ears.

Hyrkan ignored the alerts.

“Yes.”

“You cannot walk the road of black magic with just words.

Embed your determination here.”

With this, Golco took out a piece of paper as shriveled as his skin.

It was a contract, and there were five places for Hyrkan to sign both front and back combined.

It was to prevent players from complaining to game admins to change their class. This happened more often than one might expect. There were always people who didn't like their choices in games and complained to get them changed. Some even hired lawyers. The contract was to prevent something like this from happening. Hyrkan signed the five spots without batting an eye.

After confirming Hyrkan's signatures, Golco spoke while looking at Hyrkan.

“Hold out your palm.”

Hyrkan held out his palm, and Golco wrote the number 3 on it with his fingers.

[A key has been inscribed to your palm.]

Golco gave an explanation about the number.

“Go up the stairs to the 2nd floor and you'll see four rooms. If you enter the room with this number, you'll find a library. You

may bring one book out of there. You can exit and reenter whenever you want before coming out with a book, but the moment you come out with a book, you can only enter with a new key.”

Such system of keys was truly befitting that of magicians.

[At any time, you may check your conversation with the NPC through the app installed on your watch.]

After hearing the final alert, Hyrkan clenched his fists.

Chapter 10. Dancing With The Skeletons (3)

Over 50 percent of Warlord players chose to become magicians.

Magicians were surprisingly easy for beginners to play. Unlike swordsmen that had to face frightening monsters head on, magicians just had to hit their spells from the back. If they knew when and how to run away, it was perfect.

Magicians were popular and as popular as they were the demand for them was high as well.

It was a class only possible in virtual reality games, using magic itself was romance for many people.

As a result, many pondered over their first magic skill. This looked good, that looked good... even the ones who had made a decision beforehand hesitated after seeing various skill books.

But for Hyrkan, it was different.

After entering the 3rd room and finding the skill he wanted, he turned around and left without looking back.

He had no hesitation.

He didn't have a choice. The start of the necromancer skill tree was the Skeleton Fragment skill. It was a necessary skill to obtain

higher-tier skills, and it was a skill all necromancers continually used even after obtaining high-tier skills.

‘It’s nice that I don’t have to think much about it.’

After coming out of the room, Hyrkan immediately activated the skill book. Learning skills from skill books was simple. There was a palm-shaped picture on the cover of skill books. After placing one’s left hand palm on top, a hologram window popped up from the watch.

[Would you like to learn the skill, Skeleton Fragment?]

After pressing yes, one immediately learned the skill.

[You have learned the skill, Skeleton Fragment.]

[You have obtained the title, ‘A Simple Necromancer.’]

At the same time, Hyrkan obtained a title. Immediately afterwards, Hyrkan threw away the skill book in his hand on the ground. A good thing about Warlord was that one could throw away trash anywhere at any time.

Then, Hyrkan checked his Skeleton Fragment skill.

[Skeleton Fragment]

-Proficiency: F rank

-Number of skeletons able to be summoned: Warrior (1)

-Skill description: You can create a skeleton fragment. If you imbue magic power into the fragment, you can control the summoned skeleton underling.

It was a typical explanation.

“Skeleton Fragment.”

Hyrkan immediately activated the skill.

[If you use the skill without an offering, you can only create basic-type fragments.]

With a short alert, a finger-sized skeleton fragment materialized on Hyrkan's palm. The skeleton fragment looked more like a phone accessory than anything else.

Hyrkan tightly gripped the skeleton fragment.

‘What's important is this guy's Combat AI.’

The stats of skeleton underlings changed depending on the cores used as an offering. This part could be covered with sufficient funding, but the Combat AI was something money couldn't help.

According to Hyrkan's research, the Combat AI of player-summoned monsters wasn't all that good. Instead, the monsters

have the ability to learn. They can improve through numerous battles, developing their own Combat AI. It made sense. If a skeleton a level 1 player summoned had the same battle sense as a level 300 ranker, everyone would be playing necromancer.

What Hyrkan wondered was exactly how useful their starting Combat AI was.

‘Just do the basics, please. I’ll cover the rest.’

If it were completely useless, the necromancer class would prove to be more of a pain in the ass than he expected.



Almost all of Warlord’s content started with battles. At the same time, battles were the hardest content Warlord had to offer. If Warlord had a complicated battle-preparation process, then no one would bother to play Warlord.

Thus, Warlord’s battle-preparation process was rather convenient.

In the middle of it was the Subjugation Association.

The Subjugation Association offered various information and accommodations needed to hunt monsters. Almost all players became a member as if it was the most obvious thing to do. Especially for beginner players, they enjoyed various benefits, and

the first thing they did was join the Subjugation Association.

After joining the Subjugation Association, players were given armor and a weapon, which is useful until level 10. Because of this, players didn't need to grind, spend money to obtain beginner equipment, or fight monsters bare-handed.

At the same time, players could use the Training Dungeon at the Subjugation Association.

The Training Dungeon was specially prepared for players below level 10, and it was a place players had to experience. If the tutorial gave a taste as to what Warlord's real battles were like, the Training Dungeon taught the basics of preparing for those real battles. As Training Dungeons were Instant Dungeons, there was no competition and players could focus on fighting.

Currently, Hyrkan was in the Training Dungeon.

It was a circular space the size of a soccer field. Under the torchlight, two entrances could be seen.

As soon as Hyrkan stepped out of one of the entrances, a monster appeared from the other entrance.

It was a wolf.

Its golden pupil and black body could be seen under the torchlights.

‘A Coal Wolf.’

A Coal Wolf’s body was more or less made out of coal, and as it was made of coal, it was easily broken. It was weak enough that level 1 players could kill it bare-handed. Since most players had equipped the armor and weapon given by the Subjugation Association, it wasn’t a tough opponent.

Even so, only 90 percent of players survived their first battle with this monster. Out of every ten, one was killed, unable to beat this monster.

That’s what battle was.

Even if one had epic items and stats, it was useless if one didn’t know how to utilize them.

Of course, for Hyrkan, he could defeat the Coal Wolf within 30 seconds.

But not now.

Hyrkan put his hand in his pocket. Feeling the skeleton fragment in his hand, he imbued magic power into it. Having absorbed the magic power, blue light surrounded the skull-shaped skeleton fragment.

“Skeleton Warrior, I choose you!”

Hyrkan threw the skeleton fragment towards the Coal Wolf.

He threw it while striking a pose as if he threw a Pokeball holding a Pokemon.

[A Skeleton Warrior imbued with magic power materializes.]

An interesting thing occurred. The skeleton fragment fell on the ground and started to grow like a wakame (Editor’s note: wakame is a type of edible seaweed) that absorbed water.

‘This is pretty cool.’

It took less than a second for a Skeleton Warrior to take form.

The Skeleton Warrior was about 160cm tall, a bit shorter than an average male. It wasn’t particularly big either, with its skeletal structure looking like a human’s. Because of this, it felt a bit eerie. It would have been fine if it didn’t have the exact same skeletal structure as humans. Two blue fires burned inside the eye-sockets of its skull, enough to scare the living daylights out of people.

Plus, right after it appeared, it opened its mouth towards the Coal Wolf and let out a roar.

It was a show of anger towards the monster that threatened its

master, but the sight of it was quite eerie.

Staring at this Skeleton Warrior, Hyrkan's expression was that of austerity and seriousness.

“Kill it.”

Following Hyrkan's command, the Skeleton Warrior immediately began to run towards the Coal Wolf holding a long bone above its head like a club.

Growl!

The Coal Wolf showed no intention of dodging the Skeleton Warrior charging towards him. With a rough growl, the Coal Wolf began to run with its four legs.

The rattling of the Skeleton Warrior and the pattering of the Coal Wolf formed a harmony in the air, and with this sound, the distance between them shortened.

Watching this scene, Hyrkan's face became stiff.

‘Don't tell me it's just going to run into him like that. No matter how bad the Combat AI is, it can't be that...’

Before Hyrkan could even finish his thought,

Crash!

A dull sound rang out.

The Coal Wolf and the Skeleton Warrior crashed into each other. Although the Skeleton Warrior swung the bone at the Coal Wolf before they crashed, the Coal Wolf managed to slam the Skeleton Warrior's body before the bone reached him. After being slammed by the Coal Wolf, the Skeleton Warrior's body bent like a bow and got catapulted into the air. After a short flight, it rolled on the ground seemingly out of strength, making it look pitiful.

The spectating Hyrkan had an even more pitiful face.

‘It's this bad? But didn't the skeletons I see in Rich Lich's videos fight pretty cleverly?’

Hyrkan didn't expect the skeleton to fight well from the beginning. He felt he could always utilize its learning ability.

But he still had certain expectations.

Monsters in Warlord had a fairly high Combat AI. As Warlord's creator, Tobot Soft, was the top AI programming company, it made sense that Warlord's AI was incomparable to other games.

But to think it was this bad.

‘Did I make a huge mistake?’

Hyrkan knit his brows with his fingers.

While this was happening, the Coal Wolf stood valiantly after sending the Skeleton Warrior flying.

Krrrrr!

It was planning on finishing off Hyrkan. It immediately changed its target to Hyrkan. With a low growl, it started charging at Hyrkan.

Hyrkan could hear the pattering of its nimble feet, but he was still knitting his brows. Hyrkan stopped lamenting and faced the Coal Wolf only when it had already shortened their distance to 20 meters. 20 meters was enough distance for a single breath to cover.

At that moment, Hyrkan took out a fang-shaped dagger from his right thigh, and lightly threw the dagger to his left hand. As soon as his left hand grabbed the dagger, the Coal Wolf leaped at him from a distance of about 5 meters.

Its mouth was wide open, showing its sharp fangs, as it planned to bite down on Hyrkan’s neck.

Most people would shudder at the sight and become unable to move.

But who was Hyrkan?

The Hero Slaughterer.

He had reached the apex of Warlord in terms of battle sense and battle ability. Hyrkan didn't even move his feet. He only slightly turned his upper body, so that the Coal Wolf would just barely fly by its left side. And as the Coal Wolf was flying past Hyrkan's left side as he had planned,

Puuk!

Hyrkan stabbed the dagger in his left hand into the Coal Wolf's left eye.

Wimper!

The Coal Wolf rolled on the ground without landing properly.

The ability to move as little as possible to dodge an attack and using the opponent's power to deal a deep wound. It would cause average players to yell in amazement and skill, and veterans to feel chills down their backs.

'Hmph.'

Of course, to Hyrkan, it was an effortless work. To him, such a

thing was neither a battle nor a hunt. Who would call crushing an ant with his finger a hunt or a battle?

At that moment, the Skeleton Warrior that had managed to pick itself up from the ground began charging towards the Coal Wolf.

“Eh?”

Hyrkan was slightly taken aback, but the Skeleton Warrior paid no heed to its master’s reaction and continued running towards the Coal Wolf. The Coal Wolf grabbed a hold of its body and threw itself towards the Skeleton Warrior with the dagger still stuck in its left eye.

Crash!

They crashed once again.

As expected, the Skeleton Warrior was once again sent flying. Watching this happen, Hyrkan knit his brows again. The Coal Wolf then stared at Hyrkan, but instead of charging towards him, it began to circle around him with caution. It was the result of the learning ability. It had learned not to mindlessly charge at Hyrkan after witnessing his battle prowess.

‘I’ve no choice.’

Hyrkan snapped his finger once.

It was a basic command.

Snapping the finger once changed skeletons to defense mode, and snapping twice switched them to battle mode.

‘Come to think of it, didn’t three snaps make them do some special action?’

Snapping the finger thrice activated a special action pattern.

Hyrkan stared at the Coal Wolf. The Coal Wolf was still circling around Hyrkan. It seemed like it didn’t want to charge in until it found an opening. Hyrkan then stared at the Skeleton Warrior. Now in its defense mode, the Skeleton Warrior stood with alert against the Coal Wolf that had lost all interest in it.

‘Well, might as well try everything.’

The goal now was to gauge the Skeleton Warrior’s abilities. Hyrkan didn’t know what special action meant, but he planned on checking it now.

Snap snap snap!

Hyrkan snapped his finger thrice.

Then, the Skeleton Warrior that had been on alert stood up

stiffly. Then, it slowly started moving backward.

[Skeleton Warrior starts dancing.]

Michael Jackson's moonwalk. The dance that had once enamored the world, the dance that had once caused fans to burst out in tears, that legendary dance had once again shown itself in this underground dungeon.

And Hyrkan, who was its only audience, cupped his hands over his face as if he was truly touched.

‘... Is it too late to delete this character and start over as a swordsman?’

For the first time in a while, Hyrkan felt like crying while gaming.

Chapter 11. Dancing With The Skeletons (4)

Woong!

When An Jaehyun returned to the real world, he was greeted by the V-Gear's cooling sound.

[Shutting down the system. Please hold.]

The alert came after the cooling sound. An Jaehyun spat out the mouthpiece he was biting down on, and he heard the V-Gear unlock with a clunk. An Jaehyun then took off the heavy V-Gear and the thick gloves. He was covered in sweat as he lay on the bed with his running shirt and underwear. It wasn't simply because of the VR game. His one-room itself was scorching. The indoor temperature was reaching 28.5 degrees Celsius (Editor note: about 83 degrees Fahrenheit), unbefitting of January 3rd.

An Jaehyun swept back his sweat-covered hair with his hands.

'The heating bill's going to kill me.'

It wasn't that his heater broke or that he made a mistake. He had raised the temperature intentionally. Playing Warlord for a long time, he found that he could perform best between 27 and 29 degrees. This was important. If his physical body's condition fell, his in-game condition fell as well. If it remained severe, the Forced Exit System would activate. Normally it would be fine to adjust game play according to the physical body's condition, but in critical situations and raids, winning or losing depended on how

well one could play at their best condition.

‘The heating bill’s going to cost several hundred thousand, and if I add the loan interest and monthly game-cost, I’m going to be sucked dry.’

Warlord was a money-eating game.

It wasn’t easy to make a living with such a game. An Jaehyun let out a sigh. He hadn’t planned on logging out of the game just yet, but he had a reason for doing so.

‘This isn’t the necromancer I knew.’

It was to confirm.

He used his Skeleton Warrior in battle, and the more he did, the more he was disappointed. Eventually, the disappointment turned into a sense of danger. The problem wasn’t just that it didn’t know how to fight.

An Jaehyun wasn’t stupid. He had watched necromancers’ battle videos. On January 1st, after he returned to the past, went to the private loaners, borrowed money, and bought the V-Gear at the Peach Store, he had taken some time to watch various necromancers training. He even researched their training method.

However, he couldn’t find any information on why his Skeleton Warrior was so stupid.

The Skeleton Warriors in the videos he saw all fought pretty well. They properly defended with the shields they were holding, and they counterattacked with their swords or spears after defending. 10 Skeleton Warriors lined up and advancing looked quite cool.

‘Why is my skeleton so shit?’

An Jaehyun was the type to face things head-on and learn rather than theorize.

But now wasn’t the time to face anything head-on.

If he really wasn’t feeling it, he had to start over from the beginning. He didn’t have much time. He had to show results within 3 months; otherwise, he would have to waste time paying off his debt at a workshop.

‘There’s no other choice.’

There was only one thing he could do, pay money to buy information and training method.

‘I’ll have to pay for it.’

Warlord made money. It only made sense that important money-making information was expensive.

It wasn't just expensive. Information that made money or hunting strategies went for millions of won. It was the same for information on character training. Such a thing didn't come up on the videos either. Some cream of the crop information was only passed through 1 on 1 lessons. Lessons ranged from as little as 100 thousand won to several million.

Information may not seem so important, but Warlord wasn't just a mouse and keyboard game. Any information that allowed one to make money or fix their errors could go for a lifetime.

Approaching this information was easy.

There were high-level players that released videos for free. One just had to contact them through the email.

However, since An Jaehyun didn't have much money to spare, he hesitated. He never thought he needed to buy information for something as basic as Skeleton Underlings. He wanted to think about it after hitting level 10 in the Training Dungeon, but it seemed that he was too naïve.

‘Well, if I’m going to do this...’

An Jaehyun thought of his bank account. He didn't have much left from everything he had to buy; furthermore, the amount left was what he had to work with for the next 3 months. It wasn't an easy decision to spend a large sum now, but he knew he had no other choice.

‘might as well do it well.’



It had been 11 months since the launch of Warlord. The highest level player was the level 85 player Sulwoo, titled First One. The current Top 100 Level Ranking ranged from level 79 to Sulwoo’s 85.

However, it wouldn’t be wrong to introduce oneself as a Ranker if one’s level went above 70. If one’s level just went over 60, one could call oneself a top level player. The time they spent in the virtual world was no less than the time they spent in the real world.

Helgen. He was a necromancer who had reached level 61 in such an environment. He was most likely the current highest leveled necromancer, and his YouTube channel had over 300,000 subscribers. From his free-video ads and paid-video revenues, he made over ten million won every month.

His side job was coaching. There wasn’t much information about the necromancer class, making his know-hows extremely popular.

His know-how lessons were split into stages, and the lowest of them was a million won. Earning so much for a lesson video may seem like a con, but the demand was high. People who played necromancer weren’t in the right mind in the first place. Plus, he didn’t just send a lesson video. He also gave feedback on any

question one might have. He even met some buyers in-game and helped them out. This was big. Some people paid hundreds of thousands of won just to see female VJs act cutesy on stream.

An Jaehyun paid for this reason.

Because of the recent rise in won-to-dollar conversion rate, he paid close to 1.1 million won.

He immediately received a video from Helgen. His video contained various, detailed tips vital for necromancers. An Jaehyun first watched the Skeleton Fragment skill part from the various summoning magic available.

- This part is on the Skeleton Fragment skill.

In the video was a man wearing a huge, snakeskin robe. Behind him stood twelve skeletons at attention.

- Skeletons have excellent Combat AI. At the same time, they have excellent learning ability.

“Excellent my ass.”

An Jaehyun commented while watching the video with a stern, serious expression.

- In the beginning, if you summon a Skeleton Warrior and order

it to attack, my words may sound like a lie.

Snap!

Along with those words, Helgen snapped his finger once. Then, the Skeleton Warriors behind him held their shields up front and held themselves in a defensive stance. Because their boney bodies weren't big, their bodies were perfectly hidden behind the shields.

– The problem is that although they have high intelligence, they have little knowledge. Another problem is that battle itself is a very complicated thing. If someone were to tell you to watch an MMA match and write an essay on all of the moves, you would be hard pressed to do so. It's the same with skeletons. If you tell them to do something so complicated when they've never experienced it, they would never understand how. That's why there is a Defense Mode and an Attack Mode.

At this part, An Jaehyun let out a realization.

'I see.'

The explanation continued.

– It is important to train them in their Defense Mode first. Defense Mode isn't hard at all. The skeletons just have to use shields to block their opponents' attacks. It lessens the damage done to the player.

An Jaehyun understood.

‘Defense is easy to learn, and if you can defend well, you can more easily read your opponents.’

There was no way a master like An Jaehyun wouldn’t know the importance of defense.

Even the brainless Skeleton Warrior should be able to learn how to defend.

Plus, once you’re able to defend, you can read the enemy’s next move. Opponents react to how one defends. They might try to pierce directly through the defense, or they might try to bypass it. They might even choose not to attack and wait. Of these 3, the defender only had to deal with 2 of them. If the opponent tried to pierce through the defense, the defender had to endure it. If the opponent tried to bypass the defense, the defender had to stop him from doing so.

If the opponent managed to pierce through, that’s that.

But if the defender managed to hold out successfully, there was a chance for a counterattack. It may not be easy to succeed in counterattacking, but it wasn’t a hard thing to do. It was simple, yet difficult.

As An Jaehyun was thinking this, Helgen began to command his Skeleton Warriors for a demonstration. He showed himself

directing his Skeleton Warriors hunt a monster. After they had blocked the monster with their shields, they used the opening to pierce through the monster with their spears. Their form of raising their shields again showed absolute discipline.

-Through trial and error in battles, the Skeleton Warriors grow quickly. By the time you get to level 20, they should be able to fight better than most players. Then, you'll realize what excellent AI they possess.

Defend first, attack after.

That was Helgen's know-how for handling Skeleton Warriors. It wasn't anything hard once one knew it, but before one heard it, it was hard to understand.

Helgen did his money's worth. He went on to explain the best way to enhance Skeleton Warriors' Combat AI. What monsters to fight with, what level difference was best, what monsters were best for creating Skeleton Warrior cores, etc. An Jaehyun truly felt his money was well spent.

'He's good. It's worth the money.'

There was a reason Helgen was a good necromancer.

Consumers didn't spend money on content they would lose money on. Conversely, if it was worth the money, they didn't hesitate to splurge.

‘Why was someone like this unpopular?’

An Jaehyun was also curious.

At this point, even if not one of the top Rankers, a level 60 necromancer should be famous to a certain degree. But why was a player like this not in An Jaehyun’s memories? If he was at least decent, An Jaehyun should have remembered him.

There were two possibilities.

First was that he quit Warlord. The second was that he reached a limit.

‘Warlord isn’t a game you can quit because you want to. Not unless you run into an unjust problem.’

This was the main point.

Helgen’s method wasn’t bad. It was both logical and effective. Defend first, attack after. With this method, he trained his skeletons to be soldiers.

‘But this is only effective on small fries.’

There was a huge flaw in this system. Defend first meant one had to give the opponent the first attack. It was fine versus weaker

monsters. However, it was a different story for large-type monsters that were above one's level and even had a fierce spec. There was a high chance the skeletons wouldn't be able to endure that first hit.

‘Rich Lich covered this problem with money.’

By pouring money into the game, Rich Lich raised his Skeleton Warriors' specs to an unprecedented level. It was something no one else could do.

In other words!

‘This is not the way to go.’

With Helgen's style, he would only remain an ordinary necromancer. It wasn't the path for An Jaehyun.

But An Jaehyun wasn't disappointed. In fact, this matter gave him a certain confidence.

‘They aren't stupid.’

What An Jaehyun was most worried about was that his Skeleton Warrior's Combat AI was lower than his expectation. Thanks to Helgen, he learned that it wasn't that Skeleton Warriors lacked intelligence, but that they lacked knowledge.

They were like blank slates, ready to absorb any knowledge.

‘Absorb...’

An Jaehyun stood up. He grabbed a mouth full of glucose candy, then put on his V-Gear.

‘Let’s do some dancing.’



Thwack!

With a harsh, resounding sound, the Skeleton Warrior’s head flew off. It was flailing its arms around to regain balance when Hyrkan sent a low kick to its knee.

Thud!

With another resounding sound, the Skeleton Warrior fell on the ground as Hyrkan yelled towards the Skeleton Warrior.

“Get up!”

At his words, the Skeleton Warrior got up and picked his head up before plopping it back on his head.

The skeleton's eyes, made up of blue flames, were shaped into Xs, making it look rather cute.

But Hyrkan did not laugh looking at its state. He didn't sneer or scoff at it either. As soon as its eyes returned to normal, Hyrkan sent another punch to its head. This time, the Skeleton Warrior tilted its head to the side, avoiding the punch.

Thwack!

But when Hyrkan bent his elbow, it met with the Skeleton Warrior's head. Its head was shaken up, and during the time the Skeleton Warrior stood dazed, Hyrkan swiped his leg at its ankle. The Skeleton Warrior's body became parallel to the ground before it fell with a thud.

Rattle rattle!

The sound of bones hitting each other resounded out from its body.

Hyrkan yelled at such Skeleton Warrior.

"If you get hit, don't just stand there! Move! Be wary and continue dodging!"

The Skeleton Warrior gave no reply; instead, it just stared blankly at Hyrkan.

In reality, this was to be expected. Skeleton Warriors couldn't attack their master. In other words, Hyrkan's Skeleton Warrior couldn't counterattack to any of Hyrkan's attacks.

Hyrkan knew this as well. All he wanted was for it to dodge his attacks.

‘The defend first, attack second method won't work in the long-run, when you start fighting proper monsters.’

Defend first, attack second did not work.

Then?

‘Dodge first, attack second is the answer.’

The best way was to evade the first attack. Dodge instead of being hit. Dodging was also a way of defense, but it was totally different from blocking.

If this failed?

‘If this fails, I'll quit the necromancer class and restart as a swordsman. It's a waste of time and money, but it's better than throwing away my second chance.’

Give up when needed.

What won't work will never work.

Hyrkan swung his fist at the Skeleton Warrior that had stood back up. It was the same attack route as the previous time, and the Skeleton Warrior dodged the punch by tilting its head to the side. Hyrkan then bent his elbow. The Skeleton Warrior bent down, increasing its evasion radius and successfully avoiding Hyrkan's elbow.

Whish!

Hyrkan immediately swiped his leg at its ankle, but the Skeleton Warrior easily avoided it by lifting its foot.

However, as soon as Hyrkan's legs came back around, he swung his other leg around in a huge motion.

Whish!

The Skeleton Warrior bent its body back, avoiding the kick.

Then.

Thud!

It fell to the ground. Because it bent back too far, it had lost its balance.

Watching this, Hyrkan's let out a slight smile.

‘Not bad.’

It was absorbing everything. The Skeleton Warrior had a surprising advantage as well. Because it was only bones, its joints had much better maneuverability. Even if its joints got dislocated, it could easily restore itself.

It had all the right conditions for evading well. It just had to use its head and utilize its advantages.

Hyrkan!

It just needed to be around his level.

If it could...

‘If there's ten like me, that's a real dream-team.’

Grin!

Hyrkan's slight smile had now turned into a full grin.

Hyrkan touched his wristwatch and activated its music app. Immediately, music filled his surroundings.

It was one of Michael Jackson's masterpieces, Billie Jean.

"Alright, it's time to dance."

Chapter 12. A Mess Of A Character To Others (1)

[You have leveled up.]

[You have received a blessing. All debuffs have disappeared, and your stamina and magic power are now full.]

[You have reached level 10. Monsters will no longer appear in the Training Dungeon.]

As soon as he leveled up, Hyrkan turned his head as the Skeleton Warrior pulled his long bone out of a Coal Tiger. The end of the bone was sharp and eerie, and the Skeleton Warrior holding onto the bone was even more ghastly. It truly looked like a cold-blooded warrior.

Watching this scene, Hyrkan rubbed his chin.

‘I hit level 10 but...’

5 days had passed since Hyrkan began Warlord, and he had now reached the highest level possible in the Training Dungeon.

It wasn't a slow pace. It was faster than the average players and about the same speed compared to diligent players. However, compared to diligent, talented players, it was slow. Talented players that spend most of their days on Warlord can hit level 10 in

4 days. Amongst them, those at the level of Rankers can do it in 3 days.

Compared to them, Hyrkan's level-up speed was too slow.

‘It took longer than I thought.’

Before he had returned to the past, Hyrkan had hit level 10 in 3 days. It was because of this that Hyrkan was able to boldly decide to make his living in Warlord. It wasn't that he gambled thinking he may have talent.

In any case, it had taken him longer than he expected.

However, Hyrkan wasn't mad or disappointed, as he smiled in satisfaction.

‘It was worth the time investment, though.’

His gain was big.

The Skeleton Warrior's Combat AI was indeed high. He had fixed them up with his personal training, and now they could fight better than average players.

There was more.

‘This is a lot better than I thought.’

Skeleton Warriors had one absolute advantage over players.

The penalty upon death!

If they received damage, they could restore themselves using their master’s magic power.

If they were totally destroyed, they had to be re-summoned. In this case, the Skeleton Fragment was put on a 30-minute cooldown time. If a Skeleton Warrior died after fighting for 30 minutes, it could be summoned again immediately.

In other words, Skeleton Warriors could fight with no fear of death.

This was a huge advantage.

Warlord’s biggest risk was death. As a result, all battles were planned around lowering the number of deaths to as low as possible. At times, of course, it was necessary to give up one’s life. It was a game; thus, it wasn’t the hardest thing to risk losing one’s life. But for Skeleton Warriors, this risk of death was pretty much non-existent.

However, there was something else that Hyrkan found most attractive about Skeleton Warriors.

‘The best thing is that I don’t need to worry about them ever betraying me.’

Skeletons could not betray their master.

Hyrkan’s Skeleton Warrior training consisted of beatings and abuses. Even so, his Skeleton Warrior never showed the slightest sign of a counterattack. No matter what the situation, it showed an absolute loyalty towards its master. It would only bare its teeth when its master was threatened.

This was to be expected. It was AI.

But after experiencing it firsthand, Hyrkan found his Skeleton Warrior to be extremely admirable, even to the point he found it noble.

‘If it were me getting beaten up like that, I would have stabbed a knife through my throat a long time ago.’

If Hyrkan were treated the way he was treating his Skeleton Warrior, he wouldn’t have lasted a day before going on a fit of rage.

In any case, Hyrkan found the Skeleton Warrior more than satisfactory. Imagining himself controlling over twenty of such Skeleton Warriors, he was elated.

At the moment, however, Hyrkan didn't have the time to enjoy daydreaming.

'The question now is how I'm going to distribute my stat points.'

He was now level 10, meaning he couldn't continue to sucking honey off the Training Dungeon. He had to head out to the field, full of competition and violence.

Of course, he wasn't afraid of fighting at all. In truth, Hyrkan was more the type to stab someone in the back, rather than getting stabbed himself. He received a huge stab to the back before returning to the past, but that was because of betrayal. Usually, Hyrkan wasn't the type to get conned or tricked.

The problem lied in which direction he would now take.

Hyrkan collected a rather large sum of data on necromancers. He even sent email questions to Helgen.

According to the information he gathered, there were two types of necromancers in Warlord.

'Should I go the standard build?'

The most typical one was the Summon Necromancer. Upon leveling up, 5 stat points were given for distribution. Summon Necromancers put 4 or even all 5 points into magic power.

The reason was simple. Summoning magic required a lot of magic power. It required a sizable amount of magic power to summon, and more to maintain the summons. It was a class one couldn't do without enough magic power.

This was the most representative necromancer of Warlord.

But recently, there was a new trend thanks to a high-level information released by Helgen.

‘Should I go explosion?’

Explosion necromancers recently garnered attention.

This necromancer went into the explosion magic that necromancer's had. There were things like Golem Explosion, but the reason explosion necromancer received public attention was that mass explosions were possible. It required a lot of time commitment, but the power from mass explosions of corpses, skeletons, and golems went far beyond what magicians of the same level could do. But to be an explosion necromancer, it was best to put all stats into intelligence as explosion magic scaled with intelligence.

Hyrkan had to consider his options carefully. To solo raids, he knew he needed a strong, one-hit move. Jabs only worked against someone of similar size. Given most raid bosses' large sizes, he would most likely be killed before he could finish off the bosses with just jabs.

‘There’s also the immortal necromancer.’

The immortal necromancer wasn’t currently known. It went into the necromancer’s Body Modification skill tree, and these necromancers put all stats into stamina.

The immortal necromancer appeared thanks to a level 140 skill called Life Vessel. This skill allowed the user to become a lich. No matter how much damage the body received, liches did not die as long as their life vessels were safe.

Of course, they weren’t actually immortal. It was just that as long as they avoided taking direct damage to their life vessels, they could see up to a 10 times increase in stamina. Under this Life Vessel skill were various, lower-ranking body modification and regeneration skills.

This allowed them to become excellent tanks. They were the result of guilds seeking for more efficient tanks.

These were the three types of necromancers that Hyrkan knew of.

But Hyrkan couldn’t decide on one among these three.

It wasn’t that he was indecisive.

‘This isn’t enough.’

It was just that these three couldn’t match up to his expectations. None fit the image he had in his mind.

However, if he had to choose, he would go with the standard build as Rich Lich had done.

There was just no other choice.

But looking at the Skeleton Warrior’s combat capabilities, Hyrkan changed his mind.

With the defend first attack second method, the summons had no choice but to take some damage.

But if the summon could avoid attacks well enough, there was damage taken. It would be fine to have fewer points put into magic power. At least, in theory.

To put this theory into effect, there had to be a teacher or a role-model for the Skeleton Warriors to follow. There had to be someone to fill the Skeleton Warriors’ sponge-like combat AI.

Who could act as that role-model?

It was, obviously, Hyrkan.

Hyrkan was confident. No one could fight as well as he could. Given the same level, stats, and items, he was confident to triumph over anyone.

As such, no one was a better teacher than Hyrkan.

And that was the problem.

‘The Skeleton Warriors can’t dodge my attacks because of my current stats. Later on, they’re going to see my punches in slow motion.’

Now was the extent to which Hyrkan could teach his Skeleton Warrior to fight. If his Skeleton Warrior got a spec-up, it was near impossible to teach them how to fight with hand-to-hand combat. To teach them down the road, Hyrkan had to invest in strength.

But if he were to do that, his character would be a complete mess.

Before Hyrkan returned to the past, he had invested all his points into strength. This was because he was a swordsman. Even with the same stats, once swordsmen received buffs and used their skills continuously, they could easily perform 10 times the expected result.

Magicians had a similar skill as well. There was something called magic swordsmen, who used magic power to maximize their combat potential. As such, some magicians invested stat points into strength and stamina.

Black magicians were no different. There was a skill that allowed them to fight in close-quarters using their magic power. Even so, they weren't as strong as swordsmen.

Most importantly, such stat distribution led to a mess of a character that was invested in invested in neither strength nor magic power.

At the same time, this resulted in going into various skill trees.

‘It's not a bad thing per se.’

But if this was the goal, it was better to choose white magic and learn magic of all attributes to the peak.

Of course, a mess like this could become a big hit as well.

But at the very least, it was a road no one had tread before. The road could cut off in the middle or lead to a dead end. If this were the case, that would be the end. There was no way to recover after going down this path. There probably wouldn't be another chance to reset his life.

‘I can't dwell on this for too long.’

Hyrkan closed his eyes.

No matter what he chose, regret was inevitable. The question was which path would lead to fewer regrets.

‘Rich Lich was able to succeed in solo raiding, but even after throwing so much money in the game, he was unable to become the best.’

If it was his fate to fall off a cliff, then it would at least be better to throw his body towards a dream.

‘Gaming is the one thing I can do well. If I can’t be daring in games, my entire life would just be lame.’

Hyrkan controlled his watch, making a hologram window of his stat. Looking at the hologram window, Hyrkan smiled.

“All strength necromancer. What a concept. At least it’ll make for a good clickbait.”

Chapter 13. A Mess Of A Character To Others (2)

[Hyrkan]

-Level: 10

-Class: Magician

-Title: 2

-Stats: Strength (48) Stamina (3) Intelligence (14) / Magic Power (14)

Seeing the numbers on his watch's hologram window, Hyrkan grit his teeth.

‘Is this really the right choice?’

Hyrkan had put all the stat points he gained from leveling into strength, a whole 45 points.

Intelligence and magic power stat rose because of class-specific bonus. For magicians, they gained 1 point of intelligence and magic power for every level. Swordsmen gained a point of strength and stamina. On top of this, thanks to the two titles he had, Hyrkan gained a point into intelligence and magic power.

As a result, the current Hyrkan had enough magic power to summon a Skeleton Warrior 3 times.

This, of course, was just to summon. Maintaining the summoned

Skeleton Warrior or repairing damages it received would take additional magic power. Taking these into account, two Skeleton Warriors were his limit.

‘If I don’t invest into magic power, it’s only going to get worse.’

It was fine now because Skeleton Fragment’s skill rank was low. As it went up, the amount of magic power needed to maintain and repair Skeleton Warriors would increase naturally.

Furthermore, real necromancers could easily control 9 Skeleton Warriors, 3 Skeleton Magicians, and a Golem. Someone like Rich Lich controlled close to a hundred summons. Plus, necromancers usually obtained a few attack magic or curse magic. They wouldn’t be high-rank skills, but it was easy to obtain low-rank skills.

Because of this, almost all necromancers put their stat points into magic power. The magic power stat raised the magic power pool and magic power recovery amount.

‘If I continue putting all my stats into strength, I’m going to reach a limit before level 50. I’m certain.’

Hyrkan was sure.

If he continued with his current plans, by the time he was level 50, his character would be a complete mess.

This problem had to be solved with items or titles. He needed

items that lowered magic power consumption and increased magic power recovery amount. He also needed large amounts of titles that raised his magic power stat.

Of course, neither were easy.

‘If I had something like Anugas’s Necklace, I wouldn’t have to worry about this...’

Anugas’s Necklace.

It was an Epic item made from the eye of the level 200 boss monster Anugas. It reduced magic power consumption by 35%, and there was a huge uproar when its stat was first released. Furthermore, Anugas’s Necklace didn’t have a limit. A level 300 or 400 player could use it with no penalty.

‘Come to think of it, Anugas’s Necklace didn’t even have a set price. The last who possessed it was... Meteor Walker, I think?’

Because it was so expensive, its price was never released. There was never an official trade. There were only rumors of its owner; no one knew for certain. You would be targeted by all players on the server just for owning it. It was obvious its owner would pretend not to have it.

Of course, making a character with items like this in mind was crazy. It wouldn’t even make sense for Hyrkan, who would face his limit at level 50, to raise his character with an ultra-expensive,

level 200 item in mind. Hyrkan didn't even consider such a thing.

The core of Hyrkan's plan was not items, but titles.

'Well, I'm going to have to cover all this with titles.'

Titles!

It was the source of Hyrkan's confidence.

Titles were very important in Warlord. In all RPG games, it became harder to level up as one went on. It was the same for Warlord. In Warlord, however, as one went on, there were more opportunities to raise one's stats through titles.

A good title could raise a specific stat by 20 points. This was equivalent to gaining 4 levels. Most titles like this came from boss raids. It was also why guilds were so hell-bent on boss raids.

Even so, no one planned their characters with title hunting in mind. If anyone did, he would be called crazy. To put it bluntly, it was possible to buy items with money, but not titles. It was something players could gain only through game play.

'I'm crazy, alright. Who in the right mind would do something like this?'

Hyrkan turned off the hologram window.

He was often called crazy before returning to the past. It wasn't something he would fear.

Plus, it was too late for regrets.

‘I just have to face forward.’

If it was impossible, he just had to make it possible!

That was what Hyrkan had to do.



Warlord had a rather simple background story.

Fierce monsters began appearing in once a peaceful world, and a war broke out against them. What began was the Warring Era, and the ultimate goal was to become the Emperor of War, the one to put an end to this era!

This was why the game was called Warlord.

Of course, there were various stories the more one researched. The relationship between different kingdoms, heroic tales of minor tribes, ancient ruins, etc. There were many things to invoke the heroic spirit of players.

In such a world, the Subjugation Association was the first thing players came into contact with. As such, the Subjugation Association played a sizable role in the affairs of Warlord.

Monster subjugation was the main objective of the Warlord world. Everything in the game was focused around hunting monsters. There was no way the Subjugation Association, leading monster subjugations, would have little influence. All kingdoms and tribes had a close relationship with the Subjugation Association. Players, who treated the Subjugation Association as just a place to obtain monster hunting quests, would never show outstanding results.

The Subjugation Association gave out stars according to players' results. The more stars one had, the more important information and quests one received. Some players did business with these quests, the so-called trains*. There were countless players who would pay to get into quests like these. As for quests with good titles as rewards... the money involved was huge. Ordinary people wouldn't understand why anyone would spend so much money on games.

For the Top 30 Guilds, there was something called the Star Hunter team that solely focused on collecting stars rather than doing raids.

Valuable quests like these were usually given out by NPCs. Usually, players could receive Subjugation Association related quests by going to a Subjugation Association branch located in each castle, then looking through the available quests through

their watch. It was like getting Wi-Fi at a coffee shop.

As a result, when players visited the Subjugation Association, they could see a mob of people fiddling around with their watches.

They were looking for easier, more rewarding, and less time-consuming quests.

‘Incompetent people sure have it hard.’

Hyrkan didn’t intend on being a part of such mob.

Picking quests? If you were confident in your abilities, there was no need to carefully consider each option. You could just pick one at random and do it.

Plus, Hyrkan understood the Subjugation Association’s quest system better than anyone else. He had once studied everything related to the Subjugation Association. People even told him that he would have made it to a prestigious college if he studied like that during his senior year of high school. Hyrkan even paid money for valuable information. It was the one and only time he had unhesitatingly spent money for the pursuit of knowledge.

‘The quests at this level range is more or less the same. If anything, older quests are better.’

Hyrkan sorted the available quest list according to date. Quests that were old signified no one had done it, or several had failed to

complete it. They were essentially thrown away.

For Subjugation Association quests, the reward went up as more people failed to complete them. This was something not many people knew. In Warlord, information like this didn't spread as well as one might think. As Warlord dealt with more and more money, information like this acted almost like a corporate secret. It could go for several million or tens of million won. No one in the right mind would post it online just to get some likes.

Furthermore, there were people posting false information just to get some attention. Because of this, there were many false rumors about Warlord.

This wasn't all. There wasn't much competition for old quests. Most players sought out newly generated quests. They assumed the good ones would have already been completed. It was more likely for new quests to have better rewards.

And when new quests were generated, they would all be focused around a specific area. Warlord's maintenance system utilized the quest system to control user distribution. It often created quests in the same area to lead players to unpopulated areas. This was why conflicts often arose between players, parties, and guilds.

Of course, level 10 players, who were feeling confident after getting out of the Training Dungeon, wouldn't have any way of knowing this.

Whenever the time came for quests to be generated...

“I just pulled a rare-rank quest. I’m looking for two swordsmen to party with.”

“I’m a level 15 fire-attribute wizard. I’m looking for a rare-rank quest. I can vouch for my skills.”

It was like a raucous marketplace, as everyone screamed here and there.

Looking at this chaos, Hyrkan sneered. They were serious in their own right, but to Hyrkan, they seemed like kids playing around.

‘How cute.’

At that time, he ran across a certain quest.

‘Hm? Mt. Bima?’

A keyword caught his attention.

The word ‘Mt. Bima.’

He wasn’t too familiar with it, but he had definitely heard of it before.

Hyrkan searched his memories.

‘Ah!’

Surprisingly, Hyrkan managed to remember.

‘The list of quests where you could obtain the Rising Star title! That’s where I saw that word.’

Hyrkan immediately checked the content of the quest.

[A Cave in Mt. Bima]

-Quest Rank: Rare

-Quest Level Range: 10~25

-Quest Content: Mt. Bima is located east of Figur’s Castle. Monsters in Mt. Bima has become ferocious lately. Find out the cause and fix it.

-Quest Reward: 10 gold and an additional reward.

Additional reward.

It was an ambiguous expression, but Hyrkan knew it was the Rising Star title.

‘My god, I can’t believe I have the chance to get the Rising Star title.’

Rising Star title. It was a title only players under level 15 could receive. It raised the class-specific stats by 3 percent. For magicians, that would be intelligence and magic power.

This effect even applied to stats from items.

The problem was that players had to be below level 15, and that quests where one could receive it was extremely limited.

As a result, someone had taken the effort to compile all the quests that gave out the Rising Star title. It was an open-for-all information just in case a similar quest appeared in the future.

Of course, new players memorized the list as if their lives depended on it. Because it was impossible to memorize all the quest titles, most just memorized key terms. It was thanks to this that Hyrkan could remember Mt. Bima.

‘I remember memorizing this just in case... who would have thought it would come in handy here...’

Hyrkan, someone who hadn’t memorized a single English word for the SATs, had painstakingly memorized the quest list. He would never have thought studying would pay off. Life was full of surprises.

In any case, there was no way Hyrkan would miss this opportunity.

[You have begun the quest, 'A Cave in Mt. Bima]

Hyrkan confirmed the quest.

'The Rising Star title...'

A smile spread across his face. A title that gave a percentage increase was one of the best in the game.

'On top of the Rising Star title, if I can get my hands on the Supernova, Dragon Slayer, and Hero of the Great Battle titles...'

There was a term for characters that acquired several percentage increasing titles.

'Rather than a mess of a character, I'd be a cheat.'

A cheat.

It was the dream of all gamers.

Chapter 14. A Cave In Mt. Bima (1)

All new Warlord players feel a bit of doubt as they go through the tutorial.

Should I be playing this game? Is it too late to ask for a refund?

Such thoughts quickly disappear as they train in the Training Dungeon.

Their thinking changes after fighting various types of monsters in the Training Dungeon and reaching level 10.

“I might be quite talented at this.”

They become confident.

They have no choice but to become confident.

In reality, an average guy won't win fighting bare-handed against a big dog. Even if you give a knife to a grown man and ask him to kill an attack dog, he won't be able to.

But during the Training Dungeon, players face up against wolves, tigers, anacondas, and all sorts of monsters you can't even see in a zoo. Not only that, players can always leave a video footage of their fights. With a bit of editing, they became the protagonist of a movie.

As such, it was only obvious they would become confident. It was also another objective of the Training Dungeon.

It was training!

It was a system built to boost players' confidence in battles.

Upon reaching level 10, these confident players learned new skills, and the rich ones would come out to the field equipped with all sorts of expensive items.

The field was also a spectacle. Forests and mountains untouched by human hands. In this vast world, players became the dwarves or elves they saw in Lord of the Rings. They had full assurance that their adventure would become a heroic tale.

But as soon as they entered field battles, they became Hobbits. Not the courageous kind, but the one in danger.

When they began fighting monsters in forests and mountains, they learned the difference between Training Dungeon monsters and the real ones.

“Uwak!”

It was a 3-man party.

It was a typical beginner's party of a swordsman, magician, and healer. One couldn't even tell their classes apart by looking at their clothes.

“Are you retarded, how did you fall?”

“Oi! Throw your magic at it! We have to save that fuck!”

“Hold on; I'm still casting it. Also, if I throw it now, he's going to get hit too.”

“Just do it!”

The first monster they faced in the field was a monster called Deadwood Wolf.

It was a level 15 monster, a wolf looking like it was carved out of a withered tree. It had a longer body length than normal wolves, but its overall size wasn't particularly big.

It wasn't all that strong either. It was one of the weakest level 15 monsters. As one might expect from its thin and withered appearance, it had a weak defense. It was something players could easily kill with the weapons they received from the Subjugation Association. On top of this, they were extremely weak to fire magic. A level 10 fire-attribute magician could easily kill with 2 casts of Fireball magic.

It was even nicknamed the woodbag. The name obviously came

from sandbag, except it was woodbag because of its appearance.

Although only level 10, a 3-man party should easily be able to kill it. The party's plan was to have the swordsman hold it off from the front while waiting for the magician to prepare his Fireball.

But a problem occurred when they went into battle.

The swordsman threw his body towards the Deadwood Wolf as planned, and he blocked the wolf's attack with his wooden shield. He then readied his stance and prepared for its next attack. Until then, everything went smoothly.

The problem occurred when the swordsman accidentally tripped on a rock. As soon as he fell, the Deadwood Wolf jumped onto his chest.

It was in a mount position.

It wasn't easy to shake off a mounted opponent. Not only did one need power, but also technique. But how many people would have had such an experience before?

"H-Help me! Save me!"

Growl, growl! Right in front, the Deadwood Wolf let out a rough roar, injuring the swordsman with its teeth and claws. The two watching from the side panicked and didn't know what to do.

“Shit, what do we do?”

“I don’t know!”

It went without saying that the party wouldn’t have a happy ending if they continued hunting without a swordsman.

Just like this, many beginner players experience a real field battle at the cost of 48 hours.

But there were some who didn’t have a single need to pay such a cost.

Hyrkan.

Faced up against a blue werewolf on his way to Mt. Bima, anyone would think it was inevitable that he pay the price.

As a necromancer, he had even put all his stats into strength. He didn’t have any special items either. The only thing he acquired at level 10 was a new curse magic. He didn’t have the money to set his items. Everyone would say he needed to experience Warlord’s bitter taste.

Not only that, but the blue werewolf was also one of the strongest level 15 monsters.

One could tell it was nothing to mess around with just from its appearance. It was 180 cm tall with long, hanging arms. On these arms were four claws that were as sharp as knives. Through its blue fur, one could see its red eyes and protruding mouth filled with razor-sharp teeth. It was enough to cause even high-level players to cower in fear.

In fact, it was as strong as it looked.

Because of this, it was given the nickname, Beginner Killer!

Even a 3-man party would have difficulty dealing with one.

But Hyrkan, who had run into this monster, had an expression full of smiles.

‘Nice, a decent one right from the start. Blue werewolf skin is money and the bones... I’ll try using them as Skeleton Fragment ingredient.

Blue Werewolves were a fittingly rare spawn in the field.

Thanks to its nickname, Beginner Killer, the blue werewolf was a name that players looked up at least once or twice. Videos of blue werewolf hunts guaranteed certain amount of views.

Since Hyrkan ran into a moneymaking monster right from the get-go, there was no way he wouldn’t be happy.

“Start Camera.”

At this moment, the thought of losing didn't cross Hyrkan's mind.

If he had put all stat points into magic power and intelligence, it might have been hard, but he had put his into strength.

In Warlord, strength affected the body's physical capabilities, like the horsepower of cars.

In other words, there was no reason Hyrkan would fall behind in strength or speed.

Of course, since he didn't put any points into stamina, it would hurt quite a bit if the blue werewolf hit him.

But for Hyrkan, such a thing was his daily life.

In one way or another, swordsmen invested points into stamina. Tank types put most of their stat points into stamina, while the striker type, who fought against monsters in the front-line, also invested some points into stamina.

But this applied to players who were playing the game normally.

Hyrkan, who had to catch up to players who started the game a

year earlier, couldn't afford to stop and do what others would normally do.

Plus, there were advantages of being a latecomer – the legacy of the early players. One could watch monster hunting method videos to reduce battle risk, and get items that were proven to be useful.

Hyrkan used such extreme battle strategy to make a name for himself. He wasn't worried, scared, or nervous because of his lack of stamina.

Most importantly, Hyrkan had a helper.

Hyrkan threw a Skeleton Fragment he was holding onto. As soon as it made contact with the ground, it became bigger until it took the form of a Skeleton Warrior. Holding a sharp bone-knife, the Skeleton Warrior showed hostility towards the blue werewolf as soon as it appeared.

It opened its mouth and let out a silent roar, while two blue flames burned inside its eye sockets.

The blue werewolf didn't cower in front of the Skeleton Warrior's burning gaze. Instead, it strengthened its red eyes. In a battle of spirit, it wouldn't back down.

Growl!

The blue werewolf let out a cry and jumped towards the Skeleton

Warrior.

Swish, swish!

It swung its two arms in a rough, random manner. The Skeleton Warrior didn't charge towards the blue werewolf nor did it maintain a small distance from him. Instead, it distanced itself by a wide margin, avoiding the attacks, as if the spirit it had just shown were all pretense.

It was Hyrkan's teaching.

As in boxing, it was best to maintain a small, delicate distance and counterattack every time it avoided an attack. However, such a thing was close to an art. It was something both sides had to work together to film in movies.

It was undoubtedly difficult.

As such, there was no need to risk danger and stay within a range of counterattack.

Big!

Far!

It just had to avoid the attacks without counterattacking in mind.

The Skeleton Warrior didn't need to counterattack. That was Hyrkan's role, who would appear stealthily after their clash.

‘Okay.’

In front of Hyrkan, who had been hiding his presence, the back of the blue werewolf could be seen. As soon as Hyrkan caught sight of it, he ran.

Rocks, tree roots or tree stumps didn't hinder Hyrkan's charge in the slightest. He was a predator running towards its prey.

By the time the blue werewolf noticed Hyrkan's presence, it was too late.

Stab!

The sharp knife Hyrkan received from the Subjugation Association already pierced through its spine into its ribs.

At the moment it was stabbed,

Growl!

The blue werewolf turned around with a pain-filled cry. As it turned, it swung its arms like a whip. It was an instinctive reaction to attack whoever was behind it.

Having expected such reaction, Hyrkan had already let go of the knife and had lowered his body under the blue werewolf's waist. And as he lowered his body, he charged towards the blue werewolf's left leg, aiming at its knee joint, making the blue werewolf fall.

Thud!

Losing its balance, the blue werewolf fell backward. Its head hit the floor, and its red eyes shook. At the same time, the knife that was stuck on its back borrowed the force of impact with the ground and pierced through its chest.

Then, as if it had been waiting for this to happen, the Skeleton Warrior jumped onto the blue werewolf's chest.

The Skeleton Warrior then stabbed its bone-knife straight into its chest.

Stab!

The knife didn't go too deep into the chest, and it didn't match the triumphant spirit the Skeleton Warrior was showing.

The Skeleton Warrior then pulled out its bone-knife and repeatedly stabbed into the blue werewolf's body as if it wasn't satisfied.

Stab, stab!

Faced with this continuous barrage from the Skeleton Warrior, the blue werewolf let out a never before heard cry.

Kuuhung!

With this cry, the blue werewolf used its right arm to smack off the mounted Skeleton Warrior.

Thwack!

The Skeleton Warrior flew off effortlessly. It couldn't be helped as the Skeleton Warrior was too light.

Upon taking down the blue werewolf, Hyrkan distanced himself and prepared for his next move. After seeing the Skeleton Warrior fly off and seeing his magic power fall from the right corner of his eye, he helplessly shook his head.

'You have to stab it once and fall back... looks like I'll have to teach it how to properly do the mount position.'

After removing the obstacle from his chest, the blue werewolf stood up.

And when it did,

Whish!

It staggered for a moment, then held itself up straight. Even so, it was in quite a sorry state.

From the dagger pierced into its chest and three wounds made by the Skeleton Warrior, blood was flowing out like a broken faucet.

If this were reality, it would have been dead already.

But it was different in the game. The same went for players. No monsters died just because they had a hole in their chest. Even if half of their heads got crushed, they would be alive. The only way to instantly kill a monster was to cut off its head completely. Even so, this didn't work on all monsters.

Damage of this scale only counted as significant damage.

‘Alright, bleeding’s started.’

The fight was more or less over. It would die if he just dragged it out.

Except!

Hyrkan had to be careful not to give it any time to recover. Monster possessed something called recovery mode. When they entered his mode, they regenerated their wounds and HP at an astonishing rate. It was important to make sure it never went to

this state.

A monster entered its recovery mode when it didn't take damage for a certain period.

In other words, you have to continue attacking.

But there was no need to risk danger to try to pull out the dagger from its chest. At this point when the monster's level was low, there was a more efficient method.

Somewhere along the fight, Hyrkan had picked up a rock, which he now threw towards its head.

Smack!

With an incredible sound, the blue werewolf's head shook. Watching this, Hyrkan grinned.

'It's been a while since I've done rock throwing. I used to love doing this.'

A tip.

A sizable damage could be dealt to low level monsters just by throwing rocks at them.

For continuous damage, there was an even better way. In raids, it was the absolute basic of basics to use throwing weapons to prevent monsters from entering their recovery mode.

The blue werewolf glared at Hyrkan and opened its mouth.

Kwaaang!

[Blue werewolf becomes enraged.]

It was a cry full of rage.

Blue werewolf. It couldn't have been more than a few days that it spawned in the world of Warlord, but in its short life, this must have been the first time a rock hit it.

Of course, this wasn't why it was enraged. Just as the alert said, it entered an enraged status just because.

‘Looks like it took a hefty amount of damage.’

Monsters in rage mode have simpler behavior.

To let out its anger, it showed only hostility towards its enemy. It wasn't cautious about its surroundings, as it prepared to give its bones to obtain the flesh. In gaming terms, its aggro could be completely controlled.

The blue werewolf charged towards Hyrkan.

It looked terrifying as it ran enraged with its eyes turned and blood flowing.

But the smile on Hyrkan never disappeared.

‘You shouldn’t’

Snap!

‘look at me, you know?’

Snap!

As soon as Hyrkan snapped his fingers twice, the skeleton warrior who had been standing at its flank flew towards the blue werewolf like a bullet and delivered its bone-knife deep into its side.

Stab!

Even so, the blue werewolf continued charging at Hyrkan. It seemed liked it was using its final breath to deal a blow to Hyrkan.

Whish!

The blue werewolf swung its arm with enough force to crush Hyrkan's head. Hyrkan easily dodged the attack by leaning backward. Evasive maneuvers like this only appeared when Hyrkan was fully at ease.

‘This is going to be quite the picture.’

At that moment, the smile on his face quickly turned stiff before it disappeared.

“Shit!”

He even let out a curse.

Hyrkan finally realized.

‘The hahoe mask! Shit, I forgot to wear my hahoe mask!’

He realized that he made a grave mistake.

Editor's note: Since this has been a long info dump, just wanted to remind everyone that his previous guild was called the Hahoe Mask guild and that they would fight wearing hahoe masks.

Chapter 15. A Cave In Mt. Bima (2)

It was no longer an odd job to make money with paid videos. This was especially the case with gamers, who made money through gaming. In the past, they made most of their money by selling in-game items, but now paid videos of game play made much more money. There were countless number of game VJs who earned hundreds of millions of won a year.

The same went for Warlord. Even without live broadcast channels, Warlord-related videos ranked among the top of paid videos. Even Hollywood was threatened by Warlord!

It went without saying that everyone uploaded videos to make whatever amount they could. Even cows or dogs did. As a result, there were over ten million Warlord-related videos coming out every day. It wasn't easy to stand out in this sea of videos. The only way was to spend big money to actively advertise the videos or to have a concept that stood out among the crowd.

This was how the Hahoe Mask Guild was formed.

An Jaehyun and Kim Dongsoo. They decided to form a guild the moment they joined hands, and they contemplated on what concept to use to make their guild known. It wasn't easy. They even considered dirty concepts like wearing underwear only. What's funny was that there were people who have done this already. There was even a guild where the members all danced in their underwear after a successful raid. Although it wasn't a Top 30 Guild, it was fairly popular.

In any case, An Jaehyun was the one to suggest something.

“Why don’t we wear hahoe masks?”

Hahoe mask.

“It’s a very Korean-esque, don’t you think?”

It wasn’t a bad idea. Thankfully, no other guild had used this concept before.

There was another reason.

“Also, we’re all comrades in arms. Let’s not do something like distinguishing our ranks through uniforms.”

Almost all famous guilds had a symbol, and they matched their uniforms around that symbol. The bigger the guild was, the more people it had. As such, they distinguished their ranks using uniforms – 1st corp, 2nd corp, 3rd corp, etc.

But An Jaehyun suggested that every guild members wear the same mask. His dream back then was for everyone to eat and live well. His suggestion was approved, and the Hahoe Mask Guild was born. The concept of wearing hahoe masks in battles worked quite well, and they garnered attention at a quick pace.

Because of this, Hyrkan couldn’t throw away the hahoe mask. It

was his pride and joy, almost like a son. Plus, he couldn't throw away a concept he knew would work. In fact, he had to do it before others did.

But he had forgotten about it.

With the blue werewolf corpse in front of him, Hyrkan shook his head while watching the video he just took through the hologram monitor.

‘The video came out well, but...’

The battle video was amazing. His battle style was something never before seen in Warlord. It could go viral if word got around, and Hyrkan's name was naturally spread.

On the other hand, if he really wanted to make hahoe mask his concept, he couldn't release a video with his real face.

It wasn't that he feared his face becoming recognized. At this time, no one should know who he was anyways. His war against the Stormhunter Guild hadn't yet happened.

‘Concepts only work when you take it and keep it.’

What was important was the concept.

Wearing a hahoe mask after showing his face already? The

impact lessened greatly. Especially if the concept revolved around wearing masks, it was important always to have it on to add to the mysterious effect.

Most importantly, Hyrkan wasn't handsome enough that he would benefit in any way by showing his face. In fact, he would be happy not to get penalized. Of course, if he used anti-face recognition mode, he could blur his face out. It was basic. In Warlord, players could prevent others from taking videos of them by using the anti-face recognition mode. Without this system, Warlord would become a voyeur heaven.

Of course, if he wanted to upload the video, it was possible. He just had to put in the hahoe mask with CG work.

But hiring a professional to do this was something he couldn't do.

“Ehew.”

In the end, Hyrkan decided to give up on the video. Though wasteful, he could always make another one. Although blue werewolves were a popular search topic, it didn't necessarily guarantee high viewer count.

‘I was dumb.’

Moreover, it was Hyrkan's fault. He couldn't blame anyone.

And this was who Hyrkan was. He was far from the word

‘perfect.’ Except in games, he was below average in everything. It was why he bet devoted his life to gaming. If he were good at anything else, he wouldn’t have bet his life on gaming, nor would he have been so shaken after being betrayed.

After calming himself, Hyrkan got up.

He didn’t have much time.

Plus, killing the blue werewolf was a big profit in itself.

He was given an opportunity.

‘Looks like I can finally use the Skeleton Fragment skill properly.’



In Warlord, completed items didn’t drop after killing monsters.

Except for items received as quest rewards, most were crafted. The crafting process was largely split into three stages.

The first was to obtain the materials. To obtain the materials, players had to disassemble the monsters. The moment the monsters’ HP became 0 they could be disassembled. It became much easier to skin the monster, like opening a well-packed box. If you did it randomly, the tape would get in the way, but by using a

knife, it became much easier.

As soon as the leather, skin, or scales come off, the monsters begin melting. Players called it the ice-cream mode. During this process, it was possible to taste the monsters' meat. They surprisingly had various tastes, like different flavors of ice-cream. They were also cold, like a dessert after players.

Finally, after the monsters finished melting, they left behind bones and jewels.

What was important to note was that skin and bones were something obtainable from all monsters, but not jewels. Jewels had a drop rate. Some dropped them; some didn't. And these jewels were usually used to craft high-ranking items, starting from rare rank.

Furthermore, the skin and bones could be converted into coin form whenever the players wanted. If one converted the skin and bones of an apartment-sized monster, he could get enough coins to fit a 20-kilogram rice bag. It wasn't light, but it was much better than carrying around the skin and bones. Besides, no players hated getting a rice bag worth of coins. In fact, they would say 'this is all I get?' Then again, common sense would ask why they didn't just place them in the inventory.

These materials could be used to craft items with the Cube in Item Factories located in certain castles. Although the official name was Cube, players called it the slot machine. If one put in the basic materials needed to craft items and coins, a normal-rank item popped out. To get items rare or above, jewels had to be put in.

After putting in the materials in the cube, one just had to shake it furiously; then an item popped out from inside.

There were times when a unique-rank item came out from the expected normal or rare rank items. There were cube addicts who bet on this small chance and continued buying materials for crafting. It was so bad that people were concerned whether there should be a law against it. Some players spent their whole time cubing like this. Of course, as it was cumbersome to constantly shake the cube, there were workshops for it as well. The workers logged in and shook the cube all day. After a month of this part-time job, you wouldn't want to play Warlord even if you could for free.

In any case, the stat of these unique-rank items were at least 25 levels higher than normal-rank items of the same level. At a time where a level 70 player was the highest, a 25 level difference was huge.

As for the Skeleton Fragment skill, it used same materials as one would for cubing. It was a simple process. You just had to hold the coin tightly in hand and use the Skeleton Fragment skill.

Then.

[You created a Skeleton Fragment using blue werewolf bones.]

[Proficiency in Skeleton Fragment increase.]

A new Skeleton Fragment could be obtained.

Hyrkan opened his hand. Instead of a human skull, the skeleton fragment now took the form of a wolf head. Hyrkan immediately threw the skeleton fragment on the ground.

A new Skeleton Warrior appeared. With its wolf-skull, the Skeleton Warrior looked much more fearsome than before. It had two fangs invoked chills, and Hyrkan liked its burning, red eyes.

Whoosh!

Hyrkan threw a surprise punch at the Skeleton Warrior, which it lightly avoided. While avoiding, it distanced itself far away from Hyrkan. Hyrkan, who had been planning on giving it a kick, smiled instead.

‘It’s definitely faster than before.’

The new Skeleton Warrior was undoubtedly faster than the basic one.

At the same time, he felt a bit of pressure.

‘A monster for one skeleton fragment. It’s no problem for small fries, but if I want to make one out of a boss monster... what a money eating skill.’

Skeleton Warriors stats changed depending on the monster used as its base. One made from a boss monster would naturally be stronger.

On the other hand, monster bones were the most frequently used crafting material.

It meant it would cost a lot.

Of course, there was no need to be stingy. What was important was making back the money spent.

Hyrkan took out his hahoe mask.

‘No more mistakes.’

Hyrkan also took out a hahoe mask to give his Skeleton Warrior. He was fully prepared to push his concept.

“Hm?”

Once again, Hyrkan realized something.

‘It doesn’t fit because of its protruding mouth!’

That he really was a dumbass in anything other than gaming.

“Fuck, why am I so stupid?”

It was just another reason Hyrkan had to devote his life to gaming.

Chapter 16. A Cave In Mt. Bima (3)

A Skeleton Warrior landed on the back of a deadwood bear, stabbing the bear with its knife. Then, it bounced off like a spring, stepping on the deadwood bear's back and leaping away.

Kwuoo!

The deadwood bear raised its body up. It was originally to shake off the Skeleton Warrior from its back, but it was a beat too late thanks to the Skeleton Warrior's quick movement.

After gently landing on the ground, the Skeleton Warrior swiftly moved away, hiding among the trees.

Having lost sight of the Skeleton Warrior, the deadwood bear let out a furious roar while flailing its arm in the air. It was fully showing its anger. What halted its fit of rage was...

Thwack!

A rock. The rock accurately struck the deadwood bear's nose.

Because of this sudden rock attack, the deadwood bear shook his head in confusion.

Kuo?

By the time it turned towards the direction the rock had come from, Hyrkan had gotten in a baseball wind-up position. The moment the deadwood bear stared at him, Hyrkan threw the rock towards its right eye.

Thwack!

Just like before, the rock hit its mark perfectly.

Kuooo!

The angered deadwood bear lowered his body, standing on its four legs again.

Then, with its mouth opened wide, it charged at Hyrkan. Of course, it didn't bother to look around.

The Skeleton Warrior moved. It ran on all four like a wolf, and bit down on the side of the deadwood bear charging mindlessly. The jaw of the blue werewolf-based Skeleton Warrior was strong enough to bite off the deadwood bear's flesh. Moreover, there were clear marks of the Skeleton Warrior's bite, as if it had been done tens of times before.

Kuoooo!

Even while letting out a pain-filled roar, the deadwood bear didn't stop charging towards Hyrkan. But before Hyrkan did anything, it crumbled like a puppet whose strings were cut.

Damage accumulated, and its HP had finally fallen to 0.

Then.

[You leveled up.]

Hyrkan reached level 11.

‘Excellent pace.’

It took Hyrkan about 5 days to go from level 1 to level 10. A day hasn’t passed since then, but he had already leveled up.

At the same time, it was an excellent speed, it showed Hyrkan’s real ability and the source of his self-confidence.

‘The level-up speed is as good as when I was a swordsman.’

His teamwork with the Skeleton Warrior continued to improve through battles.

The blue werewolf upgrade he got proved to be especially useful.

Hyrkan stared at the wolf-skulled Skeleton Warrior. Its wolf-shaped skull wasn’t just a random design. Its biting power was more powerful than he had expected.

Furthermore, its movements were far better than when it was a normal Skeleton Warrior.

‘I knew it took a characteristic of the monster used as its base, but it’s much better than I expected.’

‘If I use dragon bones as the material, can it use Dragon Breath?’

The potential of the Skeleton Warrior might be far better than Hyrkan expected.

‘Skill proficiency’s going up well, too.’

With the Skeleton Warrior participating in every battle, it was no surprise that Skeleton Fragment skill proficiency went up quickly.

‘At this rate, I’ll be able to achieve rank E before I hit level 20.’

Of course, he didn’t have only good news.

‘The problem is that I don’t have the magic power to use curse magic.’

When he hit level 10, Hyrkan got another chance to learn a dark magic spell.

What he obtained then was the [Devil Curse].

It was a useful debuff magic that lowered the target's stats by 10 percent. However, out of the tens of fights he had, the opportunities he had to use this spell could be counted on one hand.

‘Curse magic are important too...’

The usefulness of curse magic far outranked the usefulness of summoning magic. Why else would curse magicians be a separate category? Besides, curse magic skill tree didn't just have stat decreasing spells. There were spells that worsened wounds, slowed heals, and showed illusions. Even the Top 30 Guilds would fight over well-made curse magicians. As a result, extremely popular curse magicians didn't enter guilds but acted as freelancers. Since they didn't receive any attribute penalties, they could perform above average against any enemy.

‘I can't even touch body modification yet...’

The Life Vessel magic would be a godsend to make up for his lack of stamina. This required going into body modification skill tree. Unfortunately, he couldn't even get his hands on a Skin Sewing skill book, the start of body modification skill tree.

‘In the end, it's all about money.’

The Skin Sewing skill book, which allowed the user to transplant

monster skin to his own, had to be bought with money.

On top of this, Hyrkan had to equip himself with items that made up for his lack of magic power. This also cost money.

Hyrkan was worried because he didn't have any.

‘Should I just PK?’

He even thought about doing scummy things like PKing.

Of course, he had no plans of doing so. Although he was involved in enough PKs and PvPp to be called the Hero Slaughterer, he had never gone after someone because he was bored or wanted an item.

Against Rankers, he fought fair and square. As for PKs, he had only done it as revenge for attacks against him. He was never the one to actively seek out conflict. In fact, he was outnumbered during most of his PKs. Hyrkan was always the one on the receiving end. Although he never refused a fight and was only satisfied after paying back double, he never enjoyed going after any random, innocent guy.

The fact that Hyrkan had considered such a thing now showed the desperate situation he was in. In truth, he had to show some tangible results within the next three months.

‘Tsk.’

Hyrkan clicked his tongue.

‘I wish someone would just come provoke me.’

Realizing the sort of thoughts he was having as he was backed into a corner, Hyrkan shook his head.

‘Agh, I wish some useless, ill-mannered idiots would come provoke me! If I run into just three, I can cut off their wrist and get at least three item.’

His grumbling ended there.

“Whew.”

With a deep sigh, Hyrkan got up from his seat.



[You entered Mt. Bima.]

Hyrkan stared at the summit of the mountain before him. The faraway mountain peak looked as if a giant column was reaching towards the skies. It was a peculiar mountain peak.

Mt. Bima.

It was an 1800 meter tall mountain, a rather small compared to other mountains in Warlord.

‘It took over a day.’

Hyrkan had arrived at his destination 26 hours after he left Figur’s Castle.

Actually, if he was determined to arrive at Mt. Bima, he could have done it slightly under 4 hours. But he didn’t need to. There was no time limit on the quest, so he took the liberty to level up and make some videos.

Most importantly, arriving at Mt. Bima didn’t mean his quest was completed.

‘Find a cave here... well, Warlord quests are known to be senseless.’

The real hardship began now.

How many caves would there be in Mt. Bima? There had to more than one or two. Even if there were just the one, it would be difficult to find a cave in such a large mountain.

Plus, monsters up to level 30 appeared on Mt. Bima. Although it wasn’t a boss monster, it was impossible for the present Hyrkan to

kill a level 30 monster. Not unless he was equipped with unique items.

Finally, Hyrkan needed to direct his quest process well.

Quests that gave out the Rising Star title as reward pulled in quite a lot of viewers. Although the number of players, who would obtain the Rising Star title through the same quest, would be extremely low, people naturally tended to hold onto potential lottery numbers.

Furthermore, Hyrkan was planning on releasing this video for free. The Rising Star title would be his bait. His plan was to secure a fan base using his battle style. As his fans increased, so would his profit.

‘My first goal will be to reach a thousand regular viewers!’

Hyrkan began climbing the mountain.



Online games were a no man’s land. There was no law. Players could freely utilize the in-game systems. This included PKs, monster steals, and item steals. Doing such things wouldn’t make you end up with handcuffs on your hands.

Even so, it wasn’t something people usually did. It was considered ill-mannered. Most players tried to keep the most basic

courtesy. The problem were the ones who did something when told not to.

Ralph Family.

Its three members were exactly like so.

With two swordsmen and a healer, their levels totaled to 62, each averaging to about 21.

They were friends in real life, and as they had a certain amount of money, they started the game purely to enjoy it. Everything was fine up to here. The problem was that their way of purely enjoying Warlord was to mercilessly PK players that looked easy to deal with.

Their provocation didn't just end at PKing their target. They first hindered their target's hunting or stole the monsters he was attacking. Nothing in Warlord was as infuriating as monster stealing. This was because it took a large amount of effort and concentration to kill each monster. One could let it by once, but there would not be a second time.

“How out those guys just now?”

“That 3-man party?”

“Their items weren't the default ones. We'll get quite a profit if we PK them.”

“But if they’re part of a guild, it’ll get complicated.”

Rule number one – never touch parties suspected of being part of a guild. If they did, the guild would come after them for revenge.

“Tsk. There’s no good prey today. Just a few days ago, it was half monsters, half preys.”

“That’s because the monsters were concentrated around here. Most of the quests generated now are west of Figur’s Castle. We should probably head there too.”

“Then why don’t we PK a few on our way there?”

“Don’t even think about it.”

Rule number two – don’t randomly PK people.

“We’re going to end up in the dumpster if we’re not careful.”

“I know. I was just saying.”

There was a definite difference between PKing without reason and PKing after a quarrel. Though both were dirty, a third party could interfere with the former while it was harder to do so for the latter.

“Jaiyu’s right. What’s the fun in hunting some low-level chump? It’s more fun stepping on a raging scrub.”

In the end, the Ralph Family didn’t just enjoy PK. They were the perverted types who PKed after irritating their targets until they lost their cool.

“Hey, hey.”

They had a rare finding.

“How about him?”

“Who?”

“That guy over there by himself.”

Prey had appeared. They caught sight of a player slowly climbing a mountain without a pathway.

“Let’s see. His items are the ones provided by the Subjugation Association. A swordsman? He’s got to be a swordsman right? He wouldn’t be here alone, otherwise.”

“But if he’s here by himself, he’s probably not a newbie... is he cosplaying as one?”

It was hard to find players working alone in Warlord. Most moved in a party of 3.

If there was someone moving alone, it meant one of two things.

First was that he was much higher in level than the monsters spawning in the area. Second was that he was just lucky and haven't been killed yet.

The Ralph Family once again looked at their prey.

Because he was wearing a mask of some sort, they couldn't tell what he looked like. Because they were far, they weren't able to tell his physique either. Then again, physique didn't matter in Warlord.

But having hunted on easy prey for the past few days, their sixth sense was telling them.

"He has that pushover aura. There's no way he's an expert."

"Agreed."

"Right, he reeks of that pushover smell."

He's definitely a pushover!

Because they succeeded every time they had a similar feeling, they didn't doubt themselves.

“Alright, this will be our last Mt. Bima fishing. We'll get the hell out of here afterward.”

Chapter 17. A Nail In A Pocket (1)

A lone player was hunting a slime dog, a level 10 monster. To kill this weak monster, he toiled for ten whole minutes.

When this player raised his sword to deliver the final blow, someone slammed him with his shoulder. The player fell on the ground, and the one that pushed him cut off the slime dog's head with a slash.

The player watched this happen from the ground.

The one who pushed him down, a player named Haybola, smiled at the player on the ground.

“Oh, I’m sorry.”

It clearly wasn’t an apology. He had clearly ran into him on purpose.

“What are you doing!?”

The player that had been pushed down jumped up from the ground and shouted. If this was reality, he wouldn’t hesitate to call the police.

But this wasn’t reality. It was a VR game world. There was no law nor police. There was only the fist.

“What? What did you just say?”

At the shouting player, Haybola’s expression immediately changed. He put up an intimidating face and glared at the player.

Then.

“What’s going on?”

“What’s up?”

Haybola’s friends, the remaining two members of the Ralph Family, stealthily appeared.

3 vs 1.

It was enough to calm someone who had anger management issues.

Haybola sneered.

“I made a little mistake and apologized, but this bastard here suddenly yells and curses at me.”

“What? Who dares to curse the Ralph Family’s leader?”

“Mistakes happen in games. Who gets mad over that? What a fucktard.”

Then, Haybola hit the shoulder of the stiff player, and the player faltered back.

“Say that again. I dare you.”

Haybola hit the player’s shoulder a couple more times, and the player continued to step backwards. Haybola followed and stepped forward.

Watching this scene, the other two laughed heinously. It went without saying that they had planned this out, and were now in the middle of enjoying it.

‘Haybola’s acting skills are getting better every day.’

‘We can probably pull some good views from filming these now.’

For the victim, the situation could only be infuriating. It didn’t take a genius to understand what was happening or what the aggressors wanted.

In the real world, most people would bear with it, but it was a different story in the game world. It was very rare for people to be patient even in games.

“If you don’t stop now, I won’t stand for it!”

The Ralph Family’s target this time was one of the less patient ones. Even though he continued to step backwards, he wasn’t intimidated. In the end, he erupted while looking at Haybola through his strange mask.

“Puhaha!”

Watching their victim burst out in anger, the Ralph Family laughed wholeheartedly. It was as if they were watching a comedy show. The two listening from the back were cracking up, while Haybola barely held it in and smacked the cheek of their victim.

“Won’t stand for it? What are you going to do, eh? Tell me!”

From their repeated provocations, the lone player was clearly pissed.

“If you continue, I’ll have no choice but to fight.”

“Fight? Did you just say ‘fight’?”

With Haybola yelling loud enough for his friends to hear, the two behind him were ready to pass out from laughing too hard.

‘I swear.’

‘It’s been a while since we baited someone so fun.’

To them, the victim’s angry reaction was akin to the feeling of a fish biting down on the bait. It was fun catching the fish, but the real fun came from the fish resisting and trying to get away.

Haybola was also excited to screw over their tasty find. In fact, he found it increasingly hard to hold himself in check. His whole body was itching to have a go.

“Alright, then! Let’s fight!”

So he accepted.

No, he wasn’t accepting a fight. What he would be doing was a one-sided violence, akin to killing ants. It was his opponent that would be struggling desperately.

Then, as soon as Haybola accepted his victim’s declaration of war.

Stab!

A knife pierced through his right eye.

‘Huh?’

Haybola didn't understand what just happened. He couldn't even recognize the knife tip entering his field of vision. That was how quick it happened.

Of course, as a result, vision disappeared from Haybola's right eye.

Immediately afterwards...

Stab!

The knife that pierced Haybola's right eye pierced his left eye as well. The bright world in Haybola's eyes quickly turned completely dark.

'What?'

Even now, Haybola was unable to understand what had happened to him.

This was his first time getting the blind penalty. It was very rare for players to have both their eyes attacked.

Warlord players would specialize in PvP's and PK's had to be knowledgeable about the blind penalty. It was the very basic to avoid having their eyes attacked. It was more important than even the heart or the head. In the first place, players didn't instantly die unless their heads were chopped off. Even if their eyes were taken away, it was important to not panic.

But what if you did?

“What?”

Then the meaning of levels disappeared.

While Haybola was panicking, the Ralph Family’s prey, Hyrkan, pushed Haybola’s head with his left hand. As his head tilted back, his neck was open.

Stab!

Hyrkan immediately stabbed into his neck.

And it wasn’t just once.

Stab stab!

He stabbed into it without rest. As if he was a sewing machine, his hand moved at an frightening pace.

It wasn’t just stabbing either. He was making a dotted line. He was clearly trying to make it easy to rip off his neck. The knife which began in Haybola’s Adam’s apple quickly moved to the back of his neck. In an instant, over six knife cuts were made.

“Uwaaah!”

Haybola let out a scream.

It wasn't because of pain. What pain he could feel would only be that of someone harshly poking his neck.

The problem was the circumstance. His vision had suddenly turned dark, then something sharp began stabbing into his neck. Who would be used to something like this? How many would even have experience with something like this?

It wasn't surprising for him to have panicked.

Haybola tried to struggle by flailing his arms around, but as if he had already predicted it, Hyrkan moved behind Haybola and continued stabbing at his neck.

Stab stab. This eerie noise continued to sound out like the ticking of a clock.

All this happened within a single breath of time.

‘What?’

‘Huh?’

There was no way for Haybola's two friends to respond in time.

Just a moment ago, the two of them were on the verge of passing out from laughter. But now, they were completely in a daze as they stood witless.

In a brief moment, one of the two, who had some battle experience as a swordsman, snapped out of his daze.

“Haybola!”

As he yelled out his comrade's name, the priest next to him snapped out of it as well. The swordsman player immediately pulled out his sword.

Chwing!

It was not the default item from the Subjugation Association, but one that he had purchased from the money he had saved up by PKing. Although the sword gave off a frightening aura, the swordsman only stood his ground.

Save his comrade? How? How could he save his comrade who was already held by his back?

Thoughts like these filled his mind.

Meanwhile, having heard the swordsman pull out his sword and

with his knife still in Haybola's neck, Hyrkan put his hands in his pocket and quickly threw Skeleton Warrior fragments towards Haybola's comrades.

The Skeleton Warrior quickly revealed its splendor.

“What!”

“A skeleton?”

With the sudden appearance of the Skeleton Warrior, their overloaded minds finally exploded.

‘He wasn’t a swordsman?’

‘A necromancer?’

They had thought he was a swordsman. They had no choice but to. If someone fighting with a slime dog for 10 minutes with his sword wasn’t a swordsman, then what class would he be?

But a skeleton warrior appeared. It wasn’t an ordinary skeleton warrior either, but one made using a blue werewolf as the material. His skull was clearly that of a wolf’s, and since there was no skin on a skeleton, its protruding mouth and fangs invoked fear from anyone watching.

Plus, Warlord players encountered undead type monsters around

level 30. For difficulty's sake, players only dealt with easy monsters like slimes until level 20. It was a result of Warlord's overflowing generosity.

As the two of them would never have experienced undead monsters, they had no choice but to panic.

At the same time, Haybola was also in panic as he wasn't getting any help from his comrades. Listening to the sound of their flustered breathing in a completely dark world, Haybola was ready to go crazy.

Stab stab!

Meanwhile, Hyrkan continued to stab at Haybola's neck. It almost began to sound like an instrument. While continuing his work, Hyrkan turned his body. Haybola's body turned along with Hyrkan, and they were now facing the two comrades of Haybola.

"This is self-defense. I didn't want to do this. I am not at fault."

It wasn't something someone doing such a frightening thing would say. It was like he was some sort of a psychopath.

At this moment, Hyrkan whispered into Haybola's ear.

"I have no faults. You agree, right?"

Haybola shuddered. At the same time, he was infuriated. As a result, he finally opened his tightly shut mouth.

“You...!”

At that moment, Hyrkan's sword penetrated Haybola's mouth. Haybola felt like he was biting down on a towel, but his chest felt like blowing up from the fact that he couldn't speak.

This was all Haybola could feel. However, his two comrades watching from the side were completely frozen from this torture.

‘W-What do we do?’

Although they were thinking the same thing, that was it. They could only worry in their mind.

Hyrkan noted their reactions from across his hahoe mask.

‘Early 20s or late 10s.’

Hyrkan had long ago noticed them targeting him.

It wasn't anything hard. Mt. Bima wasn't a popular hiking place. It didn't have a hiking trail in the first place. As such, the pathway was wherever people were walking. But someone was following him. If he stopped, they stopped. They didn't try to strike up a conversation with him either.

It was blatantly obvious what their goal was. There was no way Hyrkan wouldn't have noticed, as he had many experiences with such situations.

So he had long ago formed a plan to screw them over. He would hide his identity as a necromancer and act as if he was having a hard time killing a slime dog. Stepping backwards and making distance between Haybola and his friends, and letting their guard down by looking weak was all part of Hyrkan's plan.

And such a plan was necessary.

He was against 3 people, all who were higher level than him. Just Haybola's strength stat should be several times that of Hyrkan's. It was simply impossible to overwhelm them with power. If Haybola regained his cool and tried to shake off Hyrkan, he would have long disappeared from Hyrkan's grasp.

To prevent such a thing from happening, Hyrkan showed absolute cruelty. Stabbing both of his eyes from the start, constantly focusing on his neck, and baiting him to talk then penetrating it with his sword, these were all part of Hyrkan's plan to cause him to panic.

A skilled, experienced player would have responded to Hyrkan's aims.

‘The lowest of the low.’

In other words, the Ralph Family, according to Hyrkan's standards, was the lowest of the low.

At the same time, this served as proof. Proof that they didn't receive proper education from a guild!

And that meant one thing.

'No need to worry about payback.'

There was no problem with Hyrkan completely plundering these guys.

Hyrkan smiled.

'Thanks for the meal.'

Chapter 18. A Nail In A Pocket (2)

One goal of Warlord players is getting a nickname. In Warlord, a nickname was a definite proof of one's popularity. At the same time, players wanted good, cool nicknames. At the very least, no one would start out wanting an eerie nickname like Hero Slaughterer.

Of course, Hyrkan's Hero Slaughterer nickname did not originate with good intent.

Cruelty!

Hyrkan's fights were ruthless.

In a way, all fights in Warlord were ruthless. With bloody fights being the norm, it would be strange if fights weren't called ruthless. At the same time, fights between players had a bit of beauty in them. This beauty originated from the clash of different magic and skills rather than simple hand-to-hand combats.

But Hyrkan's fights was more of a one-sided massacre than a banquet of magic and skills. This meant that his fights were efficient and overwhelming, but at the same time, it meant he would be hopelessly beaten whenever he was on the losing end. A fight between evenly skilled players could be called a sport, but when the difference in their skill was big, it would just be a one-sided massacre.

But this was Hyrkan's charm. It was why a latecomer like Hyrkan

could make a name for himself. At the same time, it was something Hyrkan had to do to survive as a latecomer. As he couldn't match up in terms of items, levels, stats, skills, or titles, he had to pursue extreme efficiency in all his fights. It was fine if it looked good on its own, but he had no room to stage a cool fight.

It was when Hyrkan was betrayed by his Hahoe Mask guild and declared war on the Stormhunter Guild that his fighting style became more cruel and desperate. To fight against the world by himself, Hyrkan had no choice but to become the most ferocious animal.

After he had lost everything, Hyrkan was left with nothing but bitterness. It was truly unlucky for the Ralph Family to become the first scapegoat of such for Hyrkan.

And this truly unlucky day was currently in progress.

Stab... stab...!

Hyrkan's stabbing did not stop. He would only do so after his opponent ceased breathing. In the end, about a minute had passed since Hyrkan had captured Haybola before the stabbing finally stopped.

Haybola was now in the game over state. Haybola in the real world would have noticed this as well. If he wasn't so perverted as to enjoy being killed while he couldn't move, see, or struggle, he should have force logged out a long time ago. He wouldn't be playing Warlord with the money that it requires just to enjoy

something like it.

And in this situation where their comrade was being killed, the Ralph Family's two remaining members couldn't carelessly move.

‘What do we do?’

The priest couldn't do anything as his class wasn't for fighting. In the end, it was up to the swordsman, Jaiyu.

Currently, however, Jaiyu couldn't move easily because of the Skeleton Warrior blocking his path. He had already attacked a few times, but the Skeleton Warrior easily dodged all of his attacks. With the Skeleton Warrior showing completely different movements than the monsters he had faced so far, Jaiyu couldn't choose to forcefully attack. If he had the courage, he would already have done so.

Of course, the biggest reason was Hyrkan's ruthlessness. What seemed like a tasty fish at first turned out to be a great white shark. Plus, Jaiyu was currently in the ocean, being stared at by that very shark. As the Ralph Family would never have had the chance to face fear like this, it was only obvious that their legs would go stiff.

Hyrkan could clearly tell what state they were in.

‘I'm still weaker in terms of pure power.’

Hyrkan purposefully instilled fear into them. It was the only way

to make their minds' calculators called logic malfunction.

‘Power on power would be hard.’

In truth, Hyrkan was vastly inferior in power. The combination of a priest and a swordsman was too good. Furthermore, their difference was huge. Hyrkan was still level 11, equipped with the Subjugation Association's default items. The Ralph Family, on the other hand, were level 20 players... with possibly rare items.

‘Stamina's really the problem.’

The critical problem was Hyrkan's stamina. There was no way he wouldn't know the weakness of an all-strength necromancer.

Even with just one hit, he would yell UGH! He didn't have a priest nor potions to heal him.

But he didn't feel right letting the two go because of it. In fact, it was against his principle to let these fools worth several tens of monsters go. Such an opportunity wasn't easy to come by.

Then what he needed now...

‘Strike while the iron is hot’

Was a scheme.

Hyrkan averted his eyes, and his eyes met Jaiyu who was confronting the Skeleton Warrior.

“This is purely self-defense. I was not the one to start this fight.”

His voice flowed out without a hint of stuttering.

“Fuck off!”

Of course, for the one listening, it was pure bullshit. Jaiyu immediately let out a heated response. In truth, he had no right to do such a thing. It was them who first schemed and did an ill-mannered act. If what happened were to become public, Warlord players would applaud Hyrkan and spit on the Ralph Family. A few victims of the Ralph Family might even send Hyrkan money for a dinner or two.

In any case, once Jaiyu heard Hyrkan’s words, his mind shook once again.

‘This fucker...’

He was scared, angry, irritated, and also worried.

All sorts of thoughts filled his mind, causing a headache. He wanted to run, but at the same time, he didn’t. Jaiyu glanced at his friend, Dral.

Dral's expression wasn't all that different. With his vicious hobby of toying with players, he had expected something like this to happen one day, but he didn't think it would happen like this. Most importantly, as a priest, Dral couldn't lead the fight in any way. In the end, he was only the support. The order had to come from Jaiyu.

As a result, Jaiyu and Dral kept pushing off the lead role, giving tacit hints to each other.

Watching the two panic, Hyrkan smiled inwardly.

‘Retards.’

It wasn't his first time against players like this.

Players that acted like they were the kings, but turned into 5 year old kids the moment they were driven into a corner.

‘If you're going to run, then run. If you're going to fight, then fight.’

If Hyrkan was in their situation, he would not have hesitated to make his decision. Fight or run. These were really the only two choices in Warlord. It was best to never think that talking solved problems.

Thus.

“I no longer want to fight with you.”

Talking now would be his scheme.

“If you call it quits here, I will stop.”

With that, Hyrkan raised both his hands above his head. To Jaiyu and Dral, it was the most appealing Hyrkan had ever looked. Hyrkan also sounded sincere.

“I’ll say it now. I have no interest in your items. If you agree to end it here, let us.”

Jaiyu and Dral had no choice but to be smitten.

Jaiyu relaxed slightly. Then, he stared at Dral, and their eyes met for the first time in a while. They had both reached the same conclusion.

‘Let’s end it here.’

It wasn’t likely that the situation would turn for the better because they remained stubborn. Since their opponent was the one asking for truce, there was no reason for them to not agree. The moment Jaiyu relaxed, the shoulder of his arm holding the sword drooped. Noticing this, Hrykan...

Snap snap!

Immediately snapped his fingers twice.

Attack Mode!

With its master's command, the Skeleton Warrior charged towards Jaiyu without a shadow of doubt.

Click click!

With the sound of bones hitting each other, the Skeleton Warrior closed the gap between it and Jaiyu in a blink of an eye.

“What!”

Startled, Jaiyu swung his sword as strong as he could with his slightly relaxed body.

His sword moved horizontally like a baseball player's swing. With only a whoosh, there was no hint of sharpness in the blade. There was no way the Skeleton Warrior would be taken out by a sword filled with nothing but brute strength.

The Skeleton Warrior easily dodged the attack by lowering his waist, and at the same time, launched himself towards Jaiyu's ankle like a spring. Then, it bit down on his ankle with a snap.

His legs were guarded by armor, but the armor around his ankle were just leather boots and socks. With the Skeleton Warrior's fangs being able to easily bite off monsters' skins, it could easily deal effective damage to Jaiyu.

Plus, most people, after getting their ankle bitten, couldn't respond properly. Their eyesight narrowed and confusion blurred their vision. Even so, Jaiyu responded decently. He stabbed his sword down toward the Skeleton Warrior biting his ankle.

Thwack!

The sword went through the Skeleton Warrior's boney ribs and pierced the ground.

At the same time.

Stab!

Before anyone noticed, Hyrkan's sword closed its distance with Jaiyu and destroyed his two eyes.

“Uwak”

Dejavu.

Immediately moving behind Jaiyu, Hyrkan began to cut his neck. The bone-chilling stabbing sound once again flowed out and

Hyrkan grinned. With his scheme working out so flawlessly, there was no way he wouldn't feel happy.

This wasn't standard in any way. When dealing with multiple players, dealing with the priest first was key. If the priest remained alive, it was easy enough for corpses to come back to life. As long as a high-level priest remained alive and didn't run out of magic power, swordsmen and magicians never died.

But the current situation was different. A level 20 priest could do no more than curing small wounds and filling up lost stamina. It was far from real priests' capabilities.

Most importantly, he was too lacking. Even a kid could support a bunch of swordsmen happily fighting up front. But Dral's response while Haybola was getting killed? Completely useless. It meant he had no experience with a similar situation. In such cases, it was better to deal with the swordsman. Of course, it wasn't that Hyrkan carefully theorized and judged the situation.

The calculation in his head was simple.

'This priest is a chicken. No need to pay him any mind. He'll probably just run anyways.'

The priest was too insignificant to care about!

And as Hyrkan expected.

“Uwaaaaaah!”

The remaining player, Dral, ran off the moment Jaiyu was killed.

Hyrkan sneered. It was a victory ceremony.



“10 watches.”

The fight was over.

Hyrkan also took care of Jaiyu cleanly. He didn’t chase after Dral. It wasn’t impossible to catch up if he tried, but it wouldn’t be easy. It would take at least ten minutes, and there was a high chance of a problem occurring by the time he returned to this place.

Hyrkan concentrated on collecting his spoils.

It was nothing to scoff at. What stood out was 10 watches. Haybola and Jaiyu were each carrying 4 watches. They were, of course, from the players they hunted. With two of their own, it totaled to 10.

‘If only everything in the item slot came out.’

With this, he had secured himself at least 10 items. Considering

the level of players that were Ralph Family's targets, at least 5 of the 10 would be a miss, likely to be Subjugation Association's default items. Even so, the Ralph Family's items would be quite useful.

‘Useful items between level 15 and 20 should go for about 300,000 won.’

Furthermore, useful level 15 to 20 items, especially weapons, easily went over 100,000 won. For players that spent over 2 million won on gaming, they wouldn't be stingy on weapons they would be using for two weeks to a month.

Another source of profit were the crafting coins. Haybola and Jaiyu's pockets were filled with crafting coins and jewels that monsters dropped. In a way, there was a higher chance of this being worth more money.

Hyrkan examined the coins one by one using the app installed on his watch. After confirming them, he smiled.

‘Decent.’

PK players prioritize watches first and foremost. Then, they take expensive crafting coins or jewels. It was annoying and inconvenient to carry everything.

“Oh?”

As expected, a fairly good jewel was mixed in.

“Isn’t this Black Goblin’s Eyeball?”

Black Goblin’s Eyeball.

Hyrkan knew what it was. It was an jewelry crafting item that was used for making rare-rank items. Furthermore, it was used to craft armor for magicians.

It was an item crafting material that raised magic power and intelligence.

It was, of course, expensive.

‘This should go for a bit if I remember correctly.’

Hyrkan had obtained and sold it before. Before returning to the past, he had found it when he was around level 20. At that time, it cost around 300,000 won.

‘The others are decent too. They should all sell for quite a decent amount.’

With just 10 minutes of effort, he had earned more than he imagined. A big smile spread out across his face.

There was one more big profit.

‘What should I do with the video? Do I send it to a professional to edit? It turned out quite well, I think.’

PK videos always had decent views.

Hyrkan’s fights were cruel, thus different. In Warlord, where everyone sought after the strangest concepts to stand out, being different wasn’t a bad thing in the slightest. It was the same before Hyrkan returned to the past. It was his unique style that allowed him to stand out and succeed.

‘About 200,000 was it, to make a video?’

In this sense, this fight would become a good profile video to show off Hyrkan’s existence, skill, and potential.

The smile on Hyrkan slightly twisted.

Chapter 19. A Nail In A Pocket (3)

The moment Hyrkan grabbed his spoils, he headed straight to Figur's Castle. Holding this much all alone was equivalent to saying 'please come kill me.' Although he took some effort in arriving at Mt. Bima, it was better to lose a few hours than to lose everything.

After returning to Figur's Castle, Hyrkan separated his loot into those he needed and those he didn't.

First, he removed the Black Goblin's Eyeball from the list. He was planning on using it to craft an item. Other than that, he sold everything in a hurry. Though he ended up selling them cheaper than the market price, he was able to acquire some gold immediately. The gold he obtained was a bit less than 150,000 won, a sizable profit.

But an unexpected fortune struck when he was trading his 10 watches away.

'My god.'

Looking at the 10 items on his item list, Hyrkan's eyes became wide and open.

[Black Goblin Leather Pants]

*Main Property

– Rare-rank

- Intelligence +5

- Magic Power +5

- Required Level: 15

- *Additional Property

- All stats +2 for every additional ‘Black Goblin’ item.

- *Miscellaneous

- Leather pants made out of Black Goblin skin. Although it isn’t entirely comfortable, it allows the user to gain the power of Black Goblin.

[Deadwood Essence Sword]

- *Main Property

- Rare-rank

- Magic Power +10

- Required Level: 15

- *Miscellaneous

- It is a sword imbued with the rare essence of deadwood monsters. The sword itself is no different than an ordinary sword, but the deadwood essence empowers the user’s magic power.

‘2 rare items?’

Hyrkan was ready to dance with open arms if he got any crafted items. He was fully expecting to get Subjugation Association’s default items. Having received 2 rare items, he was beyond happy.

Furthermore, they were items that raised magic power.

‘But why use deadwood essence to make a sword?’

It was a mistake to use deadwood essence to craft a sword. Deadwood essence was a material that raised magic power by a large amount. As such, it was used to make magicians’ weapons such as wands or staffs. It was likely that the crafter blanked out in the middle of cubing. Although it was rare in rank, it would be hard to treat it as a real, rare item.

But with such weapon ending up in the hands of an all-strength necromancer, the only one who could possibly utilize it, it was indeed a twist of fate. It was as if King Arthur pulled the Excalibur.

‘If I craft a robe or shoes with the Black Goblin’s Eyeball I got, then...’

Furthermore, if Hyrkan crafted a new armor item using the Black Goblin’s Eyeball, he could get at least 20 points of magic power from the Black Goblin set effect. 20 points of magic power would multiply Hyrkan’s magic power by quite a bit even when he reached level 15.

Other than these two items, there were 5 items that weren’t from Subjugation Association’s default item. Over half of level 10 players used default items, not to mention a item from their entire item slot was chosen at random. With a luck like this, one should really buy a lottery ticket.

‘The only downside is that I can’t equip them now.’

Unfortunately, these precious items had a level 15 restriction, thus Hyrkan could not equip them at the moment.

‘Level 15.’

Hyrkan quickly made a rough calculation.

‘Rising Star title can be obtained upon completing the quest before level 15.’

It was level 15.

Once he hit level 15 and equipped these items, he would clear the quest at Mt. Bima. Even a complete beginner would be able to come to this conclusion. Hyrkan’s job was simple.

‘Time to break some records.’

Hunting.

That’s all he had to do.



Hyrkan’s expression turned somber as he stared at the website shown on his tablet PC.

‘300,000 won for video editing... it’s cheap considering Romany’s skills, but...’

After logging off, An Jaehyun obtained the video file he filmed. At the same time, he searched for a professional to edit his video. It didn’t take long. He knew who he was searching for.

Romany Films.

In the past, An Jaehyun had a deep connection with them. With most of early Hahoe Mask Guild’s videos being made by Romany Films, not much explanation was needed.

Their distance grew after Hahoe Mask Guild became more popular and received the sponsorship of major video editing teams, but Hyrkan always left his personal videos for Romany Films to edit.

‘Now that I think about it, I’ve only really met and talked with Romany once. He was really quite good.’

He was the best.

Romany Film’s owner, Romany, was a die-hard fan of Hero Slaughterer Hyrkan, and he could capture Hyrkan’s charm better than anyone else. He would even stop his other work to do Hyrkan’s videos first. Hyrkan fully planned on continuing their good, past relationship.

The problem was money.

Even with the video already being there, it still took great time and effort to edit it. A professional's time and effort meant money.

For Romany, the price was 300,000 won.

It wasn't expensive. Big shots in the field easily receive over a million won per video. Even in Romany's case, his price went over 1 million won once he got famous through the Hahoe Mask Guild. For the Top 30 Guilds, the cost of editing videos for their channels was about 30% of their operating expenses.

Because of this, An Jaehyun couldn't be stingy with money. In fact, it was a chance to use a skilled professional he approved of at a cheap cost.

Above all, this video would serve as An Jaehyun's introduction video. In a world where plastic surgery costs several million won, it would be foolish to be too stingy to spend 300,000 won on a video that would serve as his face.

‘Looks like my mouth's going to be dry for a while.’

An Jaehyun smiled bitterly.

Growl!

As if it sensed danger, his stomach let out a scream.



Romany. His dream was to become a movie director representing Hollywood. However, there were hundreds of thousands of others who shared his dream in the U.S., and Romany could do little to distinguish himself in the competition. He sold his services for a cheap price in the name of establishing personal connection and gaining experience.

With his dream, he had spent his whole life hungry. The turning point of Romany's life was the introduction of V-Gear.

The appearance of VR world was revolutionary for the movie industry as well. Those quick on their feet entered the stage to obtain the skill and experience needed to survive in the VR era. It was the same for Romany. During this process of producing VR game videos, he was able to establish a name for himself with the few that reached views in the millions. He was given the chance to live doing what he loves without having to rely on part-time jobs at the same time.

His days were joyful but boring at the same time. He had fun producing videos he loved, but it was torture to produce amazing videos from videos that showed a worthless level of skill and content. Thus, whenever he received a request, he prayed.

“Please, at the very least, let it be decent.”

He couldn't pick his clients. He could only pray for a good client.

Currently, Romany was looking into a new request he received with an apathetic face.

“Korea, introduction video, PK...”

Nothing particularly stood out as enticing in the brief summary he read. In fact, the level 11 status of the client caused his face to turn dark. When players around level 10 requested for a video, they mostly had the same line of thinking. It was for rich players to brag on social media. The videos they sent were truly worthless.

Romany had the feeling this would be another one of those videos, and his intuitions were always spot on.

But for the first time, his intuition failed him.

“....WOW.”

A switch turned on inside him when he watched the video.

He had watched a countless number of PK videos, and most of them were flashy. It really could be nothing but flashy. The clash of powerful skills and magic were like the climax scenes of movies.

But the PK video he received was not flashy. There was more or

less no skills or magic used. It was just a strangely masked player fighting 3 other players. The setting was simple. There was not a hint of flashiness in the entire video.

However, there was ruthlessness, a story, and scheming. It was as if top class actors were acting out a script.

And the best part...

– I...

Was the masked player making his opponents lower their guard by talking. Unlike in a battle of strength versus strength, the masked player's fight had tension that made its viewers swallow their saliva.

Romany was charmed.

‘This probably won't get many views.’

Honestly, Romany found it hard for this video to go viral. It was too cruel. Although Warlord was an adult-rated game, if he made the masked player's ruthlessness stand out, the video would be locked for adult only.

But that part wasn't for Romany to worry about. Since he got the money, he just had to work for it.

What was important...

“But at least it’ll be fun.”

Was that he finally found a work worthy of his full attention after so long.



Once Warlord dominated the VR game market, the vast money and businesses surrounding VR games all traveled to Warlord.

As a result, everything and anything Warlord-related began receiving value above its original value. Among these, what rose the most was human capital. Just by being good at Warlord, one could receive the same fame and attention a sports star would. All skilled players began competing with each other for market value, and a few billionaires even purchased these players like some did with soccer teams in the past.

An enormous amount of money began going back and forth, and players began to make videos dreaming of making a fortune. Of course, few geese laid golden eggs. Of 1000 players, 999 of them would be chickens incapable of laying any eggs. Only one would have a small chance of laying a golden egg.

Naturally, luck was needed just as much as skill. This lady luck only visited only those who could recognize her. The owner of the Stormhunter Guild, one of Warlord’s Top 30 Guilds, and one of the

skilled players representing Warlord as a whole – Choi Sulyeon. To receive her attention required a thousand of such luck.

But now a winner appeared.

‘Not bad.’

Choi Sulyeon was one of Warlord’s greatest players. Naturally, her standards were extremely high. Even well respected players were only mediocre in her eyes.

But now, a man in a video she was watching grabbed her attention. It was an extraordinary luck. In the first place, she didn’t usually look up videos herself. She had only come across this video by coincidence.

‘He should be around level 10, but his battle experience is above a veteran player’s. I doubt he’s a killer in real life... he must have come from another game.’

He didn’t show a particularly spectacular battle. Rather than spectacular, the man’s fighting style was better described as peculiar and full of the his own color.

In fact, Choi Sulyeon was interested in the man for a reason she couldn’t quite put to words.

Sixth sense.

Choi Sulyeon's sixth sense whispered to her.

'I want him.'

She couldn't explain why, but she wanted him in her grasp.

Of course, at this moment, Choi Sulyeon engraved the name of this video's lead in her mind.

'Hahoe Mask Hyrkan.'

Chapter 20. Danger And Chance (1)

[You leveled up.]

Along with the sound of his level up alert, Hyrkan raised his hands in the air.

“Yes!”

He let out a cheerful scream, which lightly shook the silent forest.

It wasn't a particularly fine spectacle. A man wearing a hahoe mask and celebrating with his hands up. It wasn't something a normal human being would do.

But Hyrkan didn't stop here. He began to hum and dance. As the only spectator to this scene, Hyrkan's Skeleton Warrior watched silently. It had the same expression it always had, but it seemed as if it was watching something ridiculous. A normal person would stop here due to embarrassment, but Hyrkan didn't have such a thing in his mind.

“Hm, hmm~~ level 15~!”

Although all players loved the level up alert, Hyrkan's actions were truly overbearing. If Hyrkan wasn't crazy, he must have a reason.

‘At least for a little while, I’m free from magic power shortage!’

The items he got from the Ralph Family. He finally met the requirements to equip them. He had already used the precious Black Goblin’s Eyeball to make an item.

Furthermore, these items took care of the worries Hyrkan had. His happiness was justified.

‘Alright, time to equip them!’

Hyrkan placed the sword in his hand into the sword sheath on his waist. Then, he turned his watch dial and selected the 2nd slot.

“Slot On.”

With Hyrkan’s command, his pants, shoes, and sword sheath began to melt. Underneath, new pants, shoes, and sword sheath appeared.

His black leather pants and black leather boots tightly squeezed his skin, while a long sword appeared in place of his old sword.

This was Warlord’s Slot Change System. Warlord players could store up to 3 item sets in their 3 slots and change among them as they wished.

Furthermore, the Slot Change System came with various styles.

One could transform like the Marvel hero Ironman, or transform like magical girls in anime. Of course, players had to pay for these special styles. The most popular Ironman Style cost 100 dollars per month. Even so, not only did people buy this style, but there were also people who bought Ironman-like suit and slot changed all day.

However, as Hyrkan was desperately short on money, he had just the standard style.

“Mmm.”

In any case, after changing his equipment for the first time, Hyrkan inspected his leather pants and boots. His previously happy expression quickly stiffened. Hyrkan lightly touched his butt. His Black Goblin Leather Pants shined lustrously and felt extremely smooth. Even oiled pants would not be so smooth.

The tight leather pants openly displayed his undesirable lower half. Though it fit his leather boots, it was no way matching with his average, grey-colored top.

A fashion terrorist.

Hyrkan instinctively touched the hahoe mask on his face. Confirming that it was there, Hyrkan clicked his tongue.

“Fuck.”

‘Black Goblin Leather Pants. This definitely belonged to a

woman.'

Players could design their items during the crafting phase. Crafted items automatically changed to fit the body size of the wearer. Most people did not go too crazy with their designs. If they went too avant garde, the items values would get lowered.

In this sense, tight fitting leather pants usually belonged to women. There were no gender limitations on items, and since items changed to fit the size of the wearer, it was completely fine for either gender to wear an item. Even so, few would recommend wearing the other gender's clothes.

"... god damn it."

Of course, Hyrkan didn't have the slightest mind to wear items for women.

But what choice did he have?

"At least it's easy to move around."

Hyrkan didn't have the liberty to freely change his items.

Plus, the leather pants was good enough to disregard its unsightly appearance.

To calm himself down, Hyrkan opened his stat window.

[Hyrkan]

-Level: 15

-Class: Magician

-Number of Titles: 2

-Stats: Strength (72) Stamina (7) Intelligence (43) / Magic Power (43)

Looking at his rich stat window, Hyrkan calmed his uneasy mind.

‘Black Goblin set isn’t bad at all.’

First, it raised all stat points by 4. This was the set effect for wearing 2 Black Goblin-related items. Then, Black Goblin Leather Pants and Black Goblin Leather Boots each gave 10 points to intelligence and magic power. Finally, the Deadwood Essence Sword gave another 10 points to magic power.

With that, his magic power more than doubled.

‘Looks like skeleton summoning won’t give me any stress.’

With the magic power he had, he could summon 2 skeleton without worry. It was perfect since he could summon another skeleton once he ranked up his Skeleton Fragment skill.

‘There are people running around naked, so this isn’t too bad.’

Hyrkan lightly stroked his thigh. He was truly unhappy with its smoothness.

‘...it’s not too bad.’

Hyrkan told himself once again. His complaining and grumbling ended here. What was most important was what to do now.

Before, his task was simply to level up, but now he had to avoid leveling up at all costs. One had to be below level 15 to receive the Rising Star title. If he leveled up, he would forever lose the chance to gain the Rising Star title.

Plus, he had to complete the [A Cave in Mt. Bima] quest as soon as possible. The longer it took, the more level-up time he would waste.

‘I’ll finish it within 2 days.’

Hyrkan returned to his Hero Slaughterer form.



Hyrkan stepped into a cave in front of him. Then, he immediately checked his quest through his watch.

[You arrived at the Mt. Bima Cave.]

He received a new quest alert.

‘I finally found it.’

Hyrkan stepped back out. Without entering the cave, he stared at its entrance.

To find this cave, he searched through Mt. Bima all day. This was the seventh cave he found. It wasn't difficult as he did not fight with any monsters to avoid leveling up. However, he became increasingly irritated as time went on.

Climbing a mountain to find a cave. It sounded easy but it was enough to drive people crazy.

Even now, Hyrkan was more annoyed than happy. He wanted to quickly clear the quest and move on.

However.

‘Relax.’

Hyrkan didn't force himself. Although it would be his personality to march right in, his long gaming experience wasn't for show. He knew more than anyone else what he had to do.

Hyrkan looked around. He found and stood at an appropriate

spot.

His Skeleton Warrior followed him, and Hyrkan changed it back to its fragment form. Hyrkan placed the Skeleton Warrior fragment in his pocket, and entered non-combat mode.

His next choice...

‘Log Out.’

Was logging out.’



After brushing his teeth, An Jaehyun drank a cup of dietary supplements.

“Burp.”

The dietary supplement he bought to save money truly tasted horrible. It would not be wrong to compare its taste to a nightmare.

‘I miss the days of beef proteins and French baguettes carbs...’

An Jaehyun reminisced the old days. Though not too luxurious, he had enough to buy himself whatever he wanted to eat. He

gamed with a full stomach.

After finishing his reminiscing, An Jaehyun lied back down on his bed. Around his head was not the V-Gear helmet, but his pillows.

An Jaehyun placed his head down on one pillow and placed the other between his legs.

‘My top condition.’

He had finally found the Mt. Bima Cave he was looking for. An average player would have marched right in to complete the quest. Such a player could only remain average his whole life.

‘I have to be in my top condition.’

Monsters inside mountain range caves were usually higher leveled than the monsters outside. In addition, unlike in open fields where it was easy to get behind a monster, it was hard to do so in caves. Players usually faced monsters directly.

Furthermore, it was important to pace oneself in Warlord. It was impossible to play a VR game all day. The player’s health was the most important part. Players could always be forcefully logged out depending on their body’s condition.

If the player were to be killed during a forced logged out state, that would truly be the worst. He would have to start again from

the beginning. In Hyrkan's case, he would revive in Figur's Castle and have to go through the process of climbing Mt. Bima again. The time it would take would be in no way shorter than the time it takes to just sleep.

‘Alright, time to sleep.’

It was of utmost importance to be in one's top condition before an important raid, expedition, or battle, and sleep was indeed the best tool to bring out a player's top form.

‘Zzz....’

Some say that the secret to becoming a Ranker is being able to fall asleep whenever one wanted.

“Snore...”

In this sense, An Jaehyun truly had a God-given talent for Warlord.

“Mmm... no, not the leather pants...”

An Jaehyun had the ability to fall asleep the moment his head touched his pillow.

Chapter 21. Danger And Chance (2)

Top Warlord players did not hesitate to do whatever it took to bring out at least a little more of their potential. Their methods of doing so were called Doping Recipes.

Doping Recipes of Rankers even sold for money, and in-game doping potion recipes and materials sold for a rather high price. This was one reason why raids took an enormous sum of money.

An Jaehyun, of course, had his own Doping Recipe. However, he could never sell it for money.

Cling... Cling...

In front of An Jaehyun was a large cup the size of a glass of beer than a coffee mug. 2/3 of the glass was filled with coffee, while An Jaehyun dropped several mysterious white objects into it. These white objects weren't sugar cubes, but the glucose candy he often ate.

He continued to pour in glucose candy, so much so that he wasn't putting candy in his coffee, but his coffee soaked in candy. An Jaehyun did not stop until the coffee was on the brink of overflowing. Then, he lightly sipped his coffee. Tasting the mixture of cheap sweetness and cheap bitterness, An Jaehyun frowned.

The reason others didn't try An Jaehyun's Doping Recipe was obvious. Although caffeine and sugar were both great for

energizing the brain, it was too barbaric.

‘Ugh, too bitter.’

An Jaehyun himself knew how barbaric his method was. But as he had no money to work with, this was the best method, and its effect was clear. With just a sip, he woke up from his previously sleepy state and his mind became clear.

‘Alright, let’s see what new things happened while I was asleep.’

Now completely awake, An Jaehyun turned on his tablet PC and began to look through Warlord-related news.

[Hydra Guild, First to Discover Level 100 Monster. Preparing their Hunt.]

The first news to catch his attention was news about the Hydra Guild.

With the help of coffee and glucose candy, An Jaehyun quickly worked his brain.

‘The first level 100 monster... Black Metal Warrior was it? Didn’t they fail five or six times before they succeeded?’

An Jaehyun knew the future, but he didn’t know everything. He only knew the general flow of it. The details, he would have to fill

in by reading various news articles.

‘I wish they’d fail more while they’re at it.’

To Hyrkan, the entire Top 30 Guilds was his enemy. Getting revenge aside, to become the best in Warlord, he had to go beyond the Top 30 Guilds.

‘The Black Metal Warrior is related to the Corrupt Count main scenario quest, so the Corrupt Count quest line should begin after this. Tsk. I need to get on this quest line to obtain the titles I need, but with my level... ugh, not a chance. If only I came back just 10 months earlier... I’d be the one killing that Black Metal Warrior. What a shame. Then I’d be getting the title for myself too...’

“Tsk.”

In any case, An Jaehyun enjoyed reading these news articles and reaffirming the details of the future he knew.

“Well, no choice I guess. Looks like I’ll have to make it up in The Immoral Prince, the next main scenario.”

An Jaehyun felt as if he had become almighty being.

‘The Immoral Prince... back then, I could only stay in the side lines and suck on my fingers. But now is different. Come to think of it, the Ares Guild that led The Immoral Prince main quest earned quite the money from it.’

An Jaehyun let out a light grin.

‘Yep. Be it the Hydra Guild or the Ares Guild, doesn’t matter! I’ll be the last one to laugh, hahaha!’

But this light grin...

[Stormhunter Queen defeats Head Hunter!]

Became twisted as he read the next article.

“Fuck this.”

Stormhunter Queen Choi Sulyeon.

An Jaehyun got a headache just reading her name on the paper. With her, he had an irreconcilable relationship.

“Tsk!”

He even clicked his tongue.

Of course, An Jaehyun didn’t want to continue seeing this name, but he couldn’t just avoid the name altogether.

‘If anything, I’ll do it for you, Choi Sulyeon.’

Turning off his tablet PC, An Jaehyun drank his coffee bottoms up as if it was a glass of beer. He threw the remaining candy in the cup in his mouth.

Then,

Crunch!

He bit down with all the anger he could muster.



Standing in front of a cave, Hyrkan turned on the flashlight app on his watch.

Pat!

A fist-sized sphere of light appeared from his watch. He grabbed a hold of the light sphere, and equipped it to the skull of the Skeleton Warrior next to him, making it look like he was wearing a miner’s hat. Then, he smacked the Skeleton Warrior’s head and yelled.

“Go forth!”

The Skeleton Warrior lightly touched the place he was hit, then walked into the cave.

As he watched the Skeleton Warrior go in, Hyrkan had a solemn expression.

‘I’ll finish this in one go.’

The Rising Star title wasn’t something that could be so easily obtained. Most players would fail even if they were given the chance.

The reason?

One had to clear what would normally be at least a level 20 quest at level 15. The quest difficulty was just too high. But that’s why it was called the Rising Star title. It was for someone who could do at level 15 what others could at level 20. Only someone of such caliber would be worthy of being called a Rising Star.

Plus, a 3-man party was the standard in Warlord. Quest difficulties were set with 3-man party being the standard. In other words, Hyrkan had to do alone what a 3-man party would find hard to do.

It was in no way easy.

‘If I can’t do this at level 15, it just means it’s too difficult for me to do.’

That's why he got to level 15. Though everything would come to waste if he leveled up during the quest, it was a risk he had to take. As he didn't have the capital to plaster himself with unique-rank items, this was the best he could do.

Hyrkan pulled his sword out in advance, and lowered his stance. Concentrating on everything around himself and his Skeleton Warrior, he followed behind it. His concentration was now sharper than ever.

‘Throw whatever you want at me.’

The smile beneath his hahoe mask was as frightening as a serial killer's. It demonstrated his confidence to catch whatever that's thrown at him.

But after just 10 minutes, his smile shattered.

With a snap of his finger, he yelled.

“End Camera!”

Then, irritated, he scratched his head.

“Garrggh!”

‘Why isn't there a single monster?’

For 10 minutes, Hyrkan remained tense, as if he was walking on a mine field. But nothing came out to greet Hyrkan. There wasn't even a single split path, which was common in a cave like this. He had been walking through the same, long path continuously.

‘My whole body’s itching.’

These 10 minutes have been mentally taxing. Hyrkan wasn't just walking; he was walking while maintaining peak concentration and tension. Furthermore, the limited vision from the darkness, the one way path, the unchanging scenery, and the enclosed space all caused more stress. It was like staring at a clock on the wall in a white room.

Hyrkan hopped in spot and slashed in sword in thin air. It wasn't to warm-up his body, but rather his mind. Only after did the knot in his mind unravel. Hyrkan then reassessed his situation.

‘Looks like there’s something huge ahead.’

Hunting grounds had their own styles as well.

Even at the same difficulty, some were difficult because of the sheer amount of monsters, while some were difficult because there monsters were more-powerful in place of being fewer in number.

Anyone could tell that it was currently the latter.

‘It’s not so bad...’

Hyrkan thought it was better to fight against a few than multiple. This also lowered the chance of leveling up.

‘But it’s not necessarily good either...’

Even so, it was hard to find comfort in this situation. In the end, he would have to face a strong monster.

After organizing his thoughts, Hyrkan held his watch to his mouth.

“Start Camera.”

He began walking.



The Skeleton Warrior suddenly stopped on his feet.

“Hm? Walk! Go forward! Why’d you stop?”

Even with Hyrkan’s yelling, the Skeleton Warrior remained still in the darkness, turning around and staring at Hyrkan blankly.

What’s this, a protest? The thought only glanced by before it

quickly disappeared.

Hyrkan rejoiced.

‘Could it be?’

He walked past the Skeleton Warrior, then stared at the empty space. He couldn’t see a thing. Complete darkness blocked his sight, and not even the light on the Skeleton Warrior’s head could shine light through it. Rather than darkness, it was as if there was a barrier made of darkness blocking their path.

Hyrkan reached his hands out into this darkness.

[Would you like to enter the stage?]

Immediately, he heard an alert.

‘As I thought, an instance dungeon.’

The darkness came from an instance dungeon.

In Warlord, instance dungeons weren’t too important. In fact, instance dungeons were often tied to quest. Once the quest was cleared, the instance dungeon would often disappear. This was why instance dungeons weren’t too important. They couldn’t be recycled.

“Hm.”

Instance dungeons had their pros and cons.

The pro was that they were isolated from the outside. This prevented others from interfering and messing with whoever was inside. This was why guilds welcomed instance dungeons. They could do everything according to their plan. Furthermore, as instance dungeons required success on the first try, it served as a good symbol of achievement.

But it was not without flaws.

‘I can’t run...’

Though players were free to enter, they weren’t free to leave.

If it was a field, Hyrkan could simply run if he went up against something he could not handle. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that an all-strength necromancer like him was built to escape. If it came down to it, he could use his Skeleton Warrior as bait and run. But this didn’t work in instance dungeons. He couldn’t leave before killing the monsters inside. He couldn’t expect any outside help either.

It was a true deathmatch.

Because of this, Hyrkan let out a short groan.

He didn't know what was inside. He couldn't escape either. He had no reinforcements. It was kill or be killed. With this in mind, the darkness in front of him was truly full of unfavorable conditions.

Danger.

Most players would choose to back out here. It was the logical thing to do.

‘It's indeed dangerous.’

Hyrkan didn't deny this fact either. The risk was greater than he had expected.

‘But there's more to obtain as well.’

The merit was bigger as well. Hyrkan organized the things he could obtain in his head.

‘Kill the monsters inside the instance dungeon alone, then acquire the Rising Star title... now, quest-related instance dungeons have a high chance to giving a related title. Since there won't be any outside interference, I just have to deal with whatever's inside. I don't need to worry about other monsters either. It's not like I lost any strength on my way here, and I'm still in my top condition.’

He had a lot to lose.

However, more so than ever before, he was sure of his current intuition.

‘If I can film this well, it’ll pull in a good amount of views.’

His intuition told him that this battle video would turn out great. It wouldn’t be wrong to say he had full assurance.

‘The baits are in place. I’ll at least get ten thousand within two weeks.’

The Rising Star title and solo-clearing an instance dungeon had great synergy as bait. Furthermore, anyone could tell it was something not everyone could do.

‘I mean, what crazy bastard would do something like this?’

Something not everyone could do. To earn money in Warlord, this was what one had to do.

Far more people watched Warlord-related videos than did people play the game. What the viewers wanted to see was someone accomplishing something that was seemingly impossible. No one wanted to watch something that anyone could do.

To earn money, one had to capture these viewers. The money

one could earn in-game through hunting and item crafting was incomparable to the money one could earn from pay-to-watch videos. It was why guilds and Rankers challenged unfathomably strong monsters.

Danger represented a chance to earn viewers!

‘Once Skeleton Fragment cooldown ends, I’ll go in.’

Hyrkan made his decision.

Chapter 22. Chance And Danger (3)

[You have entered an instance dungeon.]

The moment Hyrkan entered into the darkness, he found himself in a space about 300 square meters wide. The ceiling was 4 meters high, while the floor was octagonal with columns in each corner.

‘A ring.’

The stage felt similar to an MMA ring.

Then.

Prrrrr!

The sphere of light on the Skeleton Warrior’s head jumped with force and reached the ceiling. Then, streams of light began shining down on the dark space. The light streams did not brighten up the stage, but rather mixed with the darkness to form a dim lighting.

Tension filled the air.

‘Nice.’

Hyrkan liked this atmosphere. The video he was taking was coming along his expectations.

Then, when the streams of light began to reveal what was hidden in the darkness...

Krrrr!

The monster showed itself with a roar.

‘Werewolf.’

Hyrkan quickly recognized its figure. It wasn’t particularly hard to do.

‘It’s a bit big, though.’

Even so, the werewolf in front of him had several differences compared to the blue werewolf he faced earlier. This werewolf was over 2 meters high with very long arms. Its thick claws resembled Captain Hook’s hook. Besides, its fur was black, not blue.

‘Mm?’

But what caught Hyrkan’s attention the most was...

‘Is that?’

His eyes.

‘Black Marbling?’

His eyes had a mix of red and black like a marbling. It was truly grotesque.

‘Well, damn.’

The corner of his mouth went up.

‘Who would’ve thought I’d run into a quest related to the Corrupt Count here?’

Corrupt Count.

It was Warlord’s first main scenario quest.

Warlord’s main scenario was a huge current. Players had to go through this current to get to the next story.

‘The last main scenario quest I was part of was the fourth, Army of the Dragon.’

Before he returned to the past, Hyrkan had participated in the fourth main scenario quest.

Corrupt Count, Immoral Prince, Ruined Kingdom... although

Hyrkan couldn't even play the supporting role in these first three main scenario quests, he made a meteoric rise to a leader position in the Army of the Dragon. This was when the Hahoe Mask Guild began to make a name for itself.

No one knew for a fact how many main scenario quests there were. Tobot Soft had considered this information a top secret. What was important was that the rewards of the main scenario quests were amazing. First, titles were given out like candy. The difference between owning and not owning main scenario quest titles was huge.

Second, the attention was on a completely different scale. Main scenario quest related videos weren't treated like ordinary videos. They sold well even as paid videos. Over 10 million people purchased the final battle video of the third main scenario quest, the Ruined Kingdom.

Of course, core content like this was hotly contested by the Top 30 Guilds. The leaders of the main scenario quests were always from the Top 30 Guilds. Not only did they have the necessary information and manpower to complete these quests, but they also bribed or utterly destroyed their competition.

Hyrkan was now in possession of tip of that iceberg.

'The Corrupt Count quest should already be well on its way...'

The main scenario quest was a one-way bridge. One quest led to another and so on and so forth. Because of this, those ahead of him

should already have finished a large portion of the main scenario quest. There wasn't much left for Hyrkan to take for himself.

Of course, it didn't mean he didn't like it.

'I can't say no to this.'

His thoughts ended there.

Monsters corrupted by the Corrupt Count were far stronger than regular monsters. They were incomparable to the blue werewolf Hyrkan had killed before.

Snap snap!

Without a warning, Hyrkan snapped his fingers twice. The Skeleton Warrior charged at the Corrupted Werewolf with fire ablaze in its eyes.

Meanwhile, Hyrkan used his right index finger to write on the palm of his left hand.

Demon.

Immediately after he wrote this word...

[You activated the Demon Curse spell.]

An ominous dark aura appeared on his left palm.

“Grant Curse.”

Hyrkan touched the blade of his longsword with his left hand. Then, the longsword’s blade absorbed the dark aura like a sponge.

This was all Hyrkan had in his arsenal.

What was important from now was how he could utilize the weapons he had.

After finishing the curse magic, Hyrkan looked on ahead. The Skeleton Warrior and the Corrupted Werewolf would close their distance at any second now.

“30 seconds.”

Hyrkan only had one expectation from his Skeleton Warrior.

To hold its ground for just 30 seconds.

Hyrkan didn’t have the slightest hope of the Skeleton Warrior killing the Corrupted Werewolf by itself.

It just had to hold its ground for 30 seconds. Then everything

would go smoothly. He had hopes as well. After all, the Hero Slaughterer himself had given it 1 on 1 lessons, even going so far as to go all into strength.

It. Will. Endure!

But when Hyrkan had his hopes up the highest...

Thwack!

A stunning sound flowed out.

‘Ah.’

It was the sound of the Corrupted Werewolf’s arms smacking the Skeleton Warrior’s head off. The head hit the nearby wall, and soon the body also flew next to its head.

Two.

With just two swings of its arm, the Corrupted Werewolf easily subjugated the Skeleton Warrior. The Skeleton Warrior on the ground had X’s for its eyes, just as Hyrkan’s mouth was watching this scene.

‘Fuck this.’

It seemed that it still needed some more training.

Luckily, Hyrkan had profited at least a little from the exchange.

‘Its speed and power are both outstanding... but it’s not to the point it’s impossible.’

It was undoubtedly fast, but it wasn’t so fast that Hyrkan couldn’t dodge it.

Plus, seeing as how it didn’t completely destroy the Skeleton Warrior even with 2 hits, it meant its attack power wasn’t so strong as to one-hit KO Hyrkan.

‘Four hits? No, probably three.’

Three hits.

It was the ticket cost for a one-way trip to Figur’s Castle. As an added service, Hyrkan would be stuck sucking on his fingers for 48 hours in the real world.

Most people would say they’re in a desperate and dangerous situation. After all, there was no way to run.

It wasn’t much different for Hyrkan. He felt as if he was standing on the edge of a cliff. The moment he stepped backward, he would fall to his death. He felt like his heartbeat was getting faster even

though such a thing should be impossible in the game.

‘Three lives. It’s a perfect number.’

Hyrkan liked this feeling. It was the type of feeling he would never be able to achieve in the real world. The feeling that he was alive.

“Haaat!”

With a loud shout, Hyrkan charged at the Corrupted Werewolf.

Snap snap.

He snapped his fingers twice while running. The Skeleton Warrior absorbed Hyrkan’s magic power and quickly restored itself. Its eyes turned back from Xs into blazing fires.

Whoosh!

At that moment, the Corrupted Werewolf swung its arm at Hyrkan, who had entered his range. With a bone-chilling sound cutting through the air, blackness entered Hyrkan’s left field of vision.

Whish!

Hyrkan ducked and dodged the arm, as strands of his hair were cut by the werewolf's claws.

It was truly a hair's breadth apart. Immediately after the mortal danger passed by, a new danger arrived.

The Corrupted Werewolf swung its left arm at Hyrkan who had continued charging towards it after dodging its right arm. Its left arm traced a diagonal path. It wasn't something Hyrkan could dodge simply by ducking!

Whish!

But Hyrkan just leaned his body to the right, dodging the difficult path of the werewolf's arm rather simply. It looked as if the Corrupted Werewolf was moving its arms following the movements of Hyrkan's shoulders and arms.

At this point, even a bystander would be able to tell that Hyrkan was purposefully dodging the Corrupted Werewolf's attacks by a hair's breadth.

The reason...

'I see it.'

Was something only someone watching from Hyrkan's perspective could tell. The moment Hyrkan passed by a potentially life-threatening situation, he saw the side of the Corrupted

Werewolf wide open. This was his aim.

Hyrkan lightly scratched his side with his longsword. He didn't plan on making any deep wounds.

[The Corrupted Werewolf falls under the Demon Curse.]

His goal was to afflict the curse.

After his successful attack, Hyrkan breezed by the Corrupted Werewolf's back and distanced himself from it.

The Corrupted Werewolf turned to follow Hyrkan's movements, and Hyrkan also turned after he sufficiently distanced himself.

The two of them stared fixedly at each other.

Krrrr.

With a low growl, the Corrupted Werewolf let out its frustration.

Hyrkan simply taunted the Corrupted Werewolf by waggling his left index finger back and forth towards himself.

Then.

Stab!

The Skeleton Warrior that had finished restoring itself had thrown itself on the werewolf's back with its bone-knife.

Growl!

The Corrupted Werewolf let out a shriek, and the Skeleton Warrior quickly jumped off and distanced itself. The Corrupted Werewolf did not chase after the Skeleton Warrior, but rather pulled off the bone-knife stuck on its back. Then, it furiously threw the knife at the Skeleton Warrior as it glared angrily at it. The Skeleton Warrior did not shy away from its intimidating glare.

Meanwhile...

‘Let's see.’

Hyrkan was slowly and stealthily closing the distance between him and the Corrupted Werewolf.

Krrr!

However, the Corrupted Werewolf quickly turned its head towards Hyrkan and revealed its razor-sharp fangs.

‘So he gets aggroed when he's attacked, but quickly changes aggro when he's on alert.’

After finishing up his thoughts, Hyrkan charged towards the Corrupted Werewolf without a shred of hesitation. There was no need for hesitation. He knew the role he had to play, and that was to draw the Corrupted Werewolf's attention. If he did, the Skeleton Warrior would act as his teeth and bite down on the Corrupted Werewolf.



The Skeleton Warrior stared at the monster in front of him. Of course, a sense of intimidation or fear did not exist in his mind. He was only waiting for an opening.

His ill-tempered master, the one he was eternally loyal to and the one that occasionally attacked him, would provide that opening.

Click click!

The Skeleton Warrior charged.

He was a dart, and the dartboard was the monster's back. The Skeleton Warrior had already accumulated an enormous sum of scores, and this would be his last.

Stab!

The Skeleton Warrior's bone-knife dug into a wound he had made previously. The bone-knife had dug deeply into the wound, and only the hilt of the knife could be seen from the outside. At

that moment, it heard the sound of two snaps from its master. Because of the continued attack order, the Skeleton Warrior did not run.

Bite!

It bit down on the monster's back. It had dug its fangs into it. But seemingly unsatisfied, it also dug its claws into the monster's back. With its sharp claws, it furiously scratched the monster's body.

The monster's body quaked.

At that moment, strength began to boil from inside the Skeleton Warrior's body.

Stab!

The Skeleton Warrior's two hands grabbed onto the monster's flesh as if it was sand, and its mouth bit off the monster's flesh. After biting off the monster's flesh, the Skeleton Warrior opened its mouth and pointed it to the sky, letting out a soundless wolf-like cry.



[The Skeleton Warrior killed a very strong monster. Skeleton Warrior and its related skill proficiencies rise greatly.]

[Skeleton Fragment skill rank rises to Rank E.]

“Hm?”

The alert marking the end of Hyrkan’s 5-minute fight was different than what he expected.

‘What did it say?’

Hyrkan changed his concentration to hearing the alerts as if he was trying to listen to a malfunctioning radio.

[You completed the quest, A Cave in Mt. Bima.]

[3 new titles have been registered.]

‘Eh?’

Hyrkan was surprised once more.

‘3 titles?’

Thud!

Then, a static noise interfered with Hyrkan’s hearing. It was the sound of the Corrupted Werewolf’s body falling on the ground.

“Whew!”

Seeing its body fall on the ground, Hyrkan let out a breadth for the first time since the fight started.

He had fought while holding his breath.

His original plan had been to do a victory ceremony and say some cool words. However, the words he had prepared beforehand had long since disappeared amidst the sudden news.

‘Let me straighten out the situation first.’

Hyrkan first checked his left arm, where a large wound could be seen. His elbow and shoulder. Two long scars could be seen where the Corrupted Werewolf scratched him. It was quite surprisingly that it hadn’t fallen off. Of course, he couldn’t move the arm as he wished. Hyrkan grabbed his left wrist like it wasn’t his. Then, he brought the watch towards his mouth.

“End Camera.”

His first profit – the video.

Hyrkan turned the dial on his watch and turned on the quest app.

‘The quest is complete.’

His second profit, the quest rewards, had been received.

Up until now was what Hyrkan had been expecting and wanting.

But.

‘A skill rank up already?’

There was an additional profit. Hyrkan moved his fingers to turn on the skill app.

[Skeleton Fragment]

– Proficiency: Rank E

– Number of skeletons able to be summoned: Warrior (2)

‘I thought it’d happen right before I hit level 20...’

His Skeleton Fragment skill had ranked up. It had progressed much quicker than he expected.

It seemed that the game had judged the Skeleton Warrior, not Hyrkan, to have killed the werewolf as it had delivered the final blow. Attack-related skill proficiencies often went up in such cases.

‘Good for me I guess.’

Though sudden, it was a nice surprise. With the Skeleton Fragment skill rank-up, the stats of his Skeleton Warrior went up as well. Plus, he could now summon two. He had such battle prowess with just one, but now he could summon another. Just the thought of it made Hyrkan happy.

But rather than rejoicing, Hyrkan immediately looked for his fourth profit. He checked the title-related messages on his watch.

[You obtained the title, Rising Star.]

It was the title he had been aiming for.

[You obtained the title, ‘One Who Challenges the Position of Hero.’]

‘Oh? A Hero-series? Well, considering I solo-cleared an instance dungeon and first-killed the werewolf, it’s not too surprising.’

Although he knew about the title beforehand, he didn’t expect to get it here. And finally.

[You obtained the title, ‘Pursuer of Corruption.’]

It was a title Hyrkan had no connection to in his past life.

With that, Hyrkan completed his inventorying of his profits. The calculator in his brain finished its calculations, and after seeing the

result, Hyrkan let out a grin.

“That’s right!”

‘Things are finally going my way!’

However, at this moment, Hyrkan didn’t know... that the real jackpot had yet to come.

Chapter 23. 70% Luck 30% Effort (1)

As Warlord's popularity unceasingly skyrocketed, the popularity of the Top 30 Guilds that possessed the live channels skyrocketed as well.

At the same time, the competition between the Top 30 Guilds grew increasingly fierce. It arguably surpassed the level of fierce and was simply extreme and desperate. As competition grew, conflicts between the Top 30 Guilds increased. There was even a rumor that some of them faked conflicts to get more viewership from their guild battles.

With such competition, Warlord's first main scenario quest, the Corrupt Count, was practically the Holy Grail.

“Is there anything new about the Corrupt Count?”

The Corrupt Count was a hot topic that pretty much guaranteed a TV special. The rumor was that the ad-revenue for the final battle with the Corrupt Count would rival the Super Bowl's ad-revenue.

It went without saying that the Top 30 Guilds collected any and all information regarding the Corrupt Count. Some guilds even formed a monitoring division that collected Corrupt Count related information.

“There is this one video...”

“Video?”

As popular as the Corrupt Count was, the online world was overflowing with videos and information about it. Of course, most of them were no different than worthless trash.

“Does it have anything useful?”

But a jewel could be found even within a pile of trash.

“It’s a video of a level 15 player killing a Corrupted Werewolf.”

“Level 15? Then isn’t that the start of the Corrupt Count quest line? What use is that to us?”

“His fight was rather... amazing.”

Of course, the Monitoring Team didn’t just look for Corrupt Count-related information.

“It seems he obtained the Rising Star title as well.”

“The Rising Star title?”

At times, players with lots potential shine more than any treasure. The Monitoring Team was also in charge of any “Rising

Stars.”

“Plus, he killed the Corrupted Werewolf alone.”

“Alone? Wait, werewolves are normally at least level 15... and with the Corrupted title... its strength should be somewhere between level 20 and 25. You’re saying a level 15 player killed that alone?”

“Yes, sir. Also, he’s a necromancer, but he fights on the front lines.”

“Show me that video.”

And at this moment, another treasure had been discovered.



An Jaehyun was currently looking at his tablet PC with a blank expression. The tablet PC was playing a video of his game character, Hyrkan, killing a werewolf.

It was undoubtedly an amazing video. The scene of the video’s lead narrowly dodging the Corrupted Werewolves attacks while being followed up by Skeleton Warrior counterattacks was truly a sight to behold. It was unique even amongst the countless number of Warlord videos online.

But An Jaehyun's eyes didn't meet the video at the moment.

‘What’s up with the view count? Didn’t I upload this yesterday?’

The numbers placed under the video.

‘It’s already over six thousand.’

6,211.

The video An Jaehyun uploaded passed the 6,000 mark after just one day.

‘What’s this? Did someone link it on their site? Why are there so many views?’

Although Warlord videos received lots of views compared to other types of media, it wasn't easy to get 6,000 in a matter of one day. If the view count was this high, it would appear on the most-viewed video list and receive even more attention.

‘I knew the bait was good, but I didn't think it'd be this good.’

An Jaehyun had his expectation, but the result was clearly higher than what he had initially predicted.

An Jaehyun stared blankly at the screen, blissful from this

unexpected surprise.

He soon snapped back after he took a few sips of his coffee.

‘The momentum is going my way.’

What was important now was to plan for the future.

‘Should I change my plans?’

An Jaehyun had originally planned to start making videos around the late 20s. It was the ideal time to make videos and attract viewers as it was when the difference between skilled and unskilled players started to show. The videos he would be taking before then would be like videos of a child growing up. It would show what type of gamer Hyrkan is.

But An Jaehyun didn’t expect he would gain traction so quickly.

‘Should I splurge a bit more?’

It was at times like these that he needed to show more of his feats. In this sea of competition, once one caught a wave, it was best to continue riding it.

It was the same in the past. Even after the Hahoe Mask Guild was founded and they began uploading videos, it wasn’t until half a year later that they began to attract viewers and fans. This was all

because of one event that put them in the spotlight.

At that time, the Hahoe Mask Guild even borrowed money to all-in on that wave. With that money, they purchased better items for themselves.

That was the key.

Do you want to show off more? Then buying high-tier items was the only way to immediately spec-up.

The problem was money.

Although An Jaehyun didn't make much money, he saved what little he did. After all, he had an important quest of collecting 10 million won within three months.

Of course, he already had his answer.

'I should've borrowed 20 million... didn't think I'd need more money this quickly.'

An Jaehyun did not have a shred of doubt on what he needed to do.

Spend.

If he didn't invest now, he wouldn't have the chance to later. Now was the right time.

An Jaehyun stared at the coffee mug in front of him.

‘Looks like I’ll have to say goodbye to meat for a while.’

His wrist holding on to the mug felt thinner than usual, as An Jaehyun smiled bitterly.

‘I’m turning into a skeleton too.’

He was truly becoming more and more like a necromancer.



Upon returning to the Figur's Castle, Hyrkan immediately headed for the Subjugation Association. At this place, he talked to an NPC he normally wouldn't be able to meet.

“Are you the adventurer named Hyrkan who came back from Mt. Bima's cave?”

It was an NPC named Hotan. Just from a glance, Hyrkan could tell he was quite high leveled.

‘It's the next quest, I see.’

It was characteristic of scenario quests. Once you cleared one quest, you'd receive the next one.

The pro was that you knew exactly what quest to do once you cleared one, while the con was that you'd never be able to do the next one if you didn't clear the previous quest.

“What you saw was most likely a monster exposed to the power of the Corrupted One.”

“Corrupted One?”

Hyrkan didn't show any rudeness. It was essential for players to treat NPCs as if they were their fathers. They had nothing to gain by leaving a bad impression of themselves to NPCs. After all, NPCs were the traffic signs of Warlord. Although there wasn't any elaborate affection system like in dating-sim games, Warlord still had its own affection system.

At the same time, Warlord NPCs were mostly guarded and conservative. It was up to the players to actively speak their thoughts.

“What do you mean by ‘Corrupted One.’?”

“I don't know. But it's because of his power that monsters began to go berserk. As a result, the Subjugation Association placed a bounty on his head.”

“It seems we have to catch him no matter the cost. Although I am still inexperienced, if I may be of any help, I will do my best to capture that evil bastard.”

Like so.

You had to be aggressive and forward to make an NPC respond.

If you just said okay and left, you would have lost the chance to hear an answer forever. Like how traffic signs didn't come up to tourists to guide them, Warlord NPCs did not come up and give quests to players. Players had to go up and knock on the door themselves.

“Sadly, you are still too lacking to fight against the Corrupted One.”

“What must I do to have the chance?”

And for players that actively knocked on doors...

“For you... yes, considering the result you showed in Mt. Bima, you are indeed worthy of having that chance.”

The doors would open...

“East of Figur's Castle is the Bangtz Castle. There is a person

named Ahimbree there. I will write you a recommendation. He will tell you what to do.”

[The quest, ‘Ahimbree’s Teachings’, begins.]

‘Eh?’

And they would see the treasure hidden on the other side.

‘Ahimbree? Wait, THE Ahimbree? One of the seven disciples of the Grand Magus?’

The unthinkable treasure!



[Ahimbree’s Teachings]

- Quest Rank: Unique
- Quest Level Range: None
- Quest Content: Find Ahimbree and show him Hotan’s recommendation letter.
- Quest Reward: Skillbook

Checking the contents of the quest, a frown appeared on Hyrkan’s face. It wasn’t because he was unhappy or dissatisfied. The frown was from the pain of holding in the happiness that was about to erupt.”

This showed how happy Hyrkan currently was. If he didn't frown, he felt his face would hurt from smiling too much.

'Ahimbree! I can't believe it! It's the Ahimbree's Disciple quest!'

"Ha...!"

The laugh he was holding in finally burst out, twisting his frowning expression. Hyrkan quickly moved his hands to block his mouth. But his shoulders began to tremble. Nearby players that caught sight of Hyrkan clicked their tongues.

"The hell's wrong with him? Is he mad?"

"Let it go. Probably watched a sad movie or something."

For players that were at the Subjugation Association, Hyrkan was acting strangely without a doubt.

Moreover.

"Just look at his pants. No one in their right mind would wear something like that."

"You're right. No sane person would do something like that."

Hyrkan's tight leather pants attracted attention in various ways, but Hyrkan spared no thoughts for anyone around him. They weren't on his radar at all.

'I get it; the Rising Star title triggered the conditional quest.'

Ahimbree.

He was a superb magician, and one of the seven disciples of the Grand Magus Bokan.

The reason Hyrkan remembered him so well was that numerous skill books could be obtained through him. In fact, a considerable number of Unique-rank skill books were said to be distributed by the seven disciples of the Grand Magus. As such, it was the dream of all magicians to be able to obtain quests related to the seven disciples of the Grand Magus.

Now, Hyrkan had obtained a point of contact with Ahimbree.

'The Rising Star title overlapping with the Corrupt Count main scenario quest triggered this chance.'

It was all thanks to the Rising Star title.

This title served as Hyrkan's proof of potential and talent in the Warlord world. Because Hyrkan expressed his desire to fight the Corrupt Count, Hotan had given him the chance to get stronger.

‘This is great.’

Hyrkan welcomed the chance with open arms.

‘Though since my level is low; I won’t get any high-level skill book... but who cares?’

Hyrkan got up from his seat.

‘Alright, why don’t I go cube some items before I head over to Ahimbree. I’ll at least use up the crafting materials on me.’

His next destination was the Item Workshop, where the crafting cubes were located.

Chapter 24. 70% Luck 30% Effort (2)

Warlord had many castles. Amongst these, the castles that beginners start out in were comparatively large to accommodate the large concentration of players.

But there were few specific spots where players congregated. The Subjugation Association branch, the Class Tower, and the Item Workshop. Most players were around these three spots.

Of these three, the Item Workshop was the most diverse.

‘I don’t understand why these idiots come here instead of screwing around in casinos.’

If players in the other two spots were regular gamers, then players loitering around the Item Workshop could only be seen as gamer addicts. Hyrkan wasn’t particularly fond of the Item Workshop atmosphere. Every time he saw others who gambled their life in the game and failed, he could see himself in their shoes.

“Tsk.”

Holding in the bitterness, he felt, Hyrkan stepped into the Item Workshop.

The inside of the Item Workshop resembled slot-machine filled casinos. Cubes the size of small children were lined up side by side,

while players stood in front, putting in crafting coins or crafting jewels then shaking them diligently. Many seemed as if they had lost their souls as they continued to shake these cubes. These players were the ones hoping for a Rare-rank or a Unique-rank item that rarely dropped while crafting Normal-rank items. There was even a line in front of one of the cubes despite the fact that many others were still open.

‘Looks like someone popped a Unique there.’

These players bet money with the tiniest of hopes of striking it rich, and they were fittingly called gamblers rather than gamers.

Hyrkan didn’t spare a glance at them. He didn’t have an inkling of mind to involve himself with these type of players. After wandering around the place for a bit, Hyrkan sat down in front of an empty cube.

He first put in 1 gold in the cube. Then, one of the cube’s black faces turned into a touchscreen. Using the touchscreen, Hyrkan looked up the Corrupted One’s Essence, a crafting jewel, and the Corrupted Werewolf’s Bone and Corrupted Werewolf’s Skin. These, of course, were the crafting materials he got from killing the Corrupted Werewolf. The screen then showed a list of items he could create from these materials.

The entire process was rather inconvenient and boring. At the same time, it was a process that players had to go through. Looking up the items, putting in the materials, then shaking the cube. These three steps were how items were crafted. Although it was fun to test one’s luck for three or four items, one could imagine

what it would feel like when crafting hundreds of them. It was mentally taxing, to say the least, and Hyrkan had once done this job.

Before returning to the past, at the time when he was working part-time at a Warlord-related workshop.

‘I must have been crazy.’

The worst feeling was that after hundreds of Normal-rank items, when you finally got a Rare-rank item, you would have to give it to someone else. The sense of loss could only be imagined. Though, it was thanks to this part-time job that Hyrkan could get into Warlord. Without it, Hyrkan would never have played Warlord.

Placing aside the glimmering memory in his mind, Hyrkan focused on the screen in front of him.

‘Hm.’

He looked through the items of the list one by one.

What caught his attention was...

‘Mm? I can make a necklace?’

A necklace. He could craft a Rare-rank necklace. It was better than what he had been expecting.

‘I really am lucky.’

Players could equip three types of items. Armor, weapon, and accessory. Of these, accessories were the hardest to obtain. Players generally had to wait until they were almost level 30 until they could get themselves accessories. That’s how rare the crafting materials were for them.

As such, Hyrkan didn’t have much thinking to do. He quickly put in 3 Corrupted Werewolf’s Bone coins and 2 Corrupted Werewolf’s Skin coins. Then, he opened the cube and put in the crafting jewel. Finally, he selected the necklace from the touchscreen and began shaking the cube. After about 20 seconds, just as he was getting annoyed from the shaking...

[You succeeded in crafting an item.]

An alert sounded out.

Rather than being happy, Hyrkan was slightly irritated.

‘Warlord’s good and all, but it irritates you in the strangest places.’

And with an irritated face, Hyrkan opened the cube. Immediately, his face stiffened.

“What.”



[Pursuer of Corruption Necklace]

*Main Properties

- Unique-rank Item
- Increases class-specific stat proportional to level
- All stats +18
- Required level: None
- Required Condition: Title ‘Pursuer of Corruption’

*Sub-properties

- You have not yet selected a skill option bonus.
- This item becomes tied to the crafter.

*Miscellaneous

- This item was crafted to significantly boost the power of its user through the Corrupted One’s power.

Looking at the item options through the hologram window, Hyrkan breathed in deep. At this time, there was only one word in his mind.

‘Whoa.’

The word was ready to pop out of his throat at any moment. Even with his vast experience, Hyrkan could only gape at this marvel. He wasn’t just surprised; he was mesmerized.

‘It’s not even just a Unique; it’s a Chronical Unique!’

Chronical Unique.

It referred to items only obtainable through the main scenario quest process.

These items had better options than ordinary Unique items. However, they could not be traded or dropped. As such, players traded their crafting materials, but even these were exceedingly rare. Their price was whatever the seller called.

But now a Chronical Unique had appeared for Hyrkan!

‘I can’t think, my head’s spinning.’

Although he had played games for a long time before returning to the past, he had never been so lucky.

Of course, if the item were tradable, he would have felt luckier. If he found a rich guy, he might have gotten enough to pay off the amount he borrowed.

But Hyrkan wasn’t too disappointed.

‘I couldn’t even place 3rd in all those lotteries, but this is where I hit my luck!’

He was more than satisfied with what he got. If he were any luckier, he would begin to be worried.

After regaining his calm, Hyrkan immediately went into the bonus skill option screen. The bonus skill option was for skills level 20 and below. Hyrkan selected the black magic category upon which 10 or so magic spells appeared. Of these, what caught Hyrkan's attention was the option related to Skeleton Fragment.

[Number of Skeletons Allowed to Summon by Skeleton Fragment + 1]

Hyrkan did not hesitate.

‘Looks like God just can’t wait to see me take over Warlord.’



“Oppa’s got your items; he’s coming to get you~♪.”

Grey pointed hat, the symbol of Warlord’s magicians. Top and gloves made out of Green Lizard skin. Tight leather pants and leather boots. Finally, a necklace with a purple jewel the size of a baby’s fist.

Wearing these ridiculous assortment of clothes was no other than Hyrkan.

They were something people wouldn't get paid to wear. They were enough to make people watching embarrassed.

Even so, Hyrkan was happily singing away, which he couldn't do well either. He even danced to the beat of the old-school song as he headed towards Bangtz Castle.

“Come out already...”

Of course, there was no way monsters would leave such an unsightly being alone.

“... it really did.”

One monster sauntered towards Hyrkan. It was a large bear mixed with a pattern of brown and green. A Forest Bear.

It was one of the tougher level 25 monsters. Even with its high stamina and attack power, it didn't drop a single item that made money. Also, the EXP (experience point) it gave was comparatively lower. As such, most Warlord players chose not to deal with it given the choice.

If it were the usual Hyrkan, he would've clicked his tongue upon seeing the Forest Bear, cursing his bad luck.

But the current Hyrkan was a bit different than usual.

He wasn't normal.

Not only regarding his mental state...

'It's finally here.'

But also regarding his current battle prowess.

'I was getting all itchy just waiting.'

In a blink of an eye, he had gotten an unbelievable spec-up. Not only did he get a Unique item from what should have been a Rare item, but he also purchased some Rare items at a low price. These items were, of course, the green leather top and gloves. His entire body was showing why it was so cheap. It wasn't something someone would normally pay to wear.

However, as he had already given up on fashion with the leather pants, Hyrkan had no qualms wearing them.

His spec-up didn't just end here.

Watching the Forest Bear slowly walk up to him, Hyrkan put his hand in his pocket, grabbing three Skeleton Fragments.

'150,000 each.'

He had purchased new crafting coins to craft 3 new Skeleton Fragments. For these, he spent almost 500,000 won. To be honest, Hyrkan was dying to know.

Skeleton Warrior's Combat AIs were shared. In other words, there was no need to train new Skeleton Warriors.

Then, how capable would these three Skeleton Warriors be?

And if Hyrkan added his own skills?

Hyrkan could guarantee it.

Strongest in history!

Hyrkan had faced a countless number of experts and Rankers, and he knew the current Warlord better than anyone else in the world. Even he couldn't fathom the power he would have in the future.

Knowing that such power was now in Hyrkan's hands, any gamer would tremble. It was also why Hyrkan had not stopped grinning.

Alas, Hyrkan knew he couldn't continue grinning forever. He forcefully erased the grin off his face and threw the Skeleton Fragments on the ground. Bulky skeletons with skulls resembling a crocodile appeared. The Skeleton Warriors held sharp knives on

their right hand and carried shields woven from bones.

The Skeleton Warriors that were created using Lizardman as the sacrifices didn't hide their aggressiveness upon seeing the Forest Bear.

Upon seeing the number of enemies increase, the Forest Bear also stopped its sauntering and began charging towards Hyrkan. Watching the scene, Hyrkan slowly put on his hahoe mask.

Then, he spoke into his watch.

“Start Camera.”

It signaled the start of a fight.

Chapter 25. 70% Luck 30% Effort (3)

A Forest Bear's thick arm swung past Hyrkan's head.

Whoosh!

Along with a terrifying sound.

‘Whew.’

Hyrkan did not run in such a terrifying situation. The moment he dodged the attack, he lifted his head up and faced the Forest Bear eye to eye. He was completely unintimidated, as he seemed ready to strike a blow with his sword at any time.

The Forest Bear also didn't take his eyes off of Hyrkan. He expressed fury at Hyrkan and Hyrkan only. He didn't have any room or reason to look away from someone clearly showing hostility towards him.

UWOOOOH!

The forest shook along with the Forest Bear's sonorous roar.

And within this sound...

‘Alright, now! Get in here! I drew the aggro perfectly!’

Hyrkan gave his command. Responding to his command, a Skeleton Warrior jumped up into the air. Throwing its body to stab the Forest Bear's back, the Skeleton Warrior seemed entirely dignified.

Stab!

The Skeleton Warrior's knife pierced the bear's flesh and dug deeply into its back. The instant the knife pierced into the Forest Bear, the Skeleton Warrior let go of the knife and quickly moved to distance itself from the bear.

UWOOH!

The Forest Bear let out a pain-filled cry as it turned around. It seemed to want to kill whoever stabbed the knife into its back.

Uwoh?

But what entered his sight was not the Skeleton Warrior that stabbed him and ran. Another one was running towards him in a straight line in an obvious manner.

Uwoh!

Without a shred of hesitation, the Forest Bear blew off the charging Skeleton Warrior's head.

Thwack!

With a skull-crushing sound, the Skeleton Warrior's head flew off far into the distance.

Watching this happen, Hyrkan shouted almost instinctively.

“You idiots! Work together! If you see your friend going in and attacking, you should expect the turn-around and go in a breath later or look for another opening! Don't go in so obviously, that's like passing the ball to the goalkeeper!”

At this time, the one remaining Skeleton Warrior charged at the Forest Bear.

“HEY!”

Snap!

Startled, Hyrkan snapped his finger once. The Skeleton Warrior that had been following an obvious path like the one before held up its shield and changed into Defense Mode.

Krrr...

Watching the sudden change in movement, the Forest Bear hesitated. The Forest Bear slowly turned to face Hyrkan, while

Hyrkan drew his knife and distanced himself. Watching Hyrkan back off, the Forest Bear entered its Alert Mode.

A momentary respite.

Using this opportunity, the headless Skeleton Warrior headed into the forest to find its missing head.

Click Click!

Like a child, the Skeleton Warrior walked with its arms out, and watching this scene from the corner of his eyes, Hyrkan grit his teeth.

‘Ehew.’

The fact that Skeleton Warriors shared their Combat AIs was an undeniable benefit as Hyrkan didn’t need to teach them from zero. As a result, his Skeleton Warriors all had superb evasion. Backing off right after an attack and flying in like an arrow on an opening were both the result of Hyrkan’s education.

The problem was...

‘These brainless idiots... well, they’re not supposed to have a brain but...’

They couldn’t cooperate at all.

When one acted, another had to act in response, and another had to act anticipating that response. That was 'teamwork', but it just didn't work. They didn't act like interlocking gears, but rather separate, independent ones.

As a result, accidents like the one just now happened in battle.

'This huge magic power loss...'

Of course, a normal necromancer would have been able to endure. In the first place, with enough magic power, the skeletons could recover from most damages.

The problem was Hyrkan. As an all-strength necromancer, he didn't have such freedom with his magic power. Damage to his Skeleton Warriors wasn't something he could ignore.

Hyrkan glanced to the side. The Skeleton Warrior had come back with its head, and it was now fitting it back onto its neck. Rather than irritation or anger, the sight caused Hyrkan to sigh.

'Yeah, it was my bad for expecting so much from you.'

In the end, there was only one answer.

'It was my bad for trying to eat a free lunch. Yep.'

Hyrkan had no choice but to teach them again from the start.

“Damn.”

‘I thought I could sit back like all other necromancers, while the summons did the work...’

Of course, to teach them, Hyrkan needed to direct the fight from the front line.

‘I guess it’s my destiny to fight on the front line with my life on the line.’

Hyrkan held up his longsword and charged towards the Forest Bear.



An Jaehyun currently held his tablet PC. In it, 3 videos were being shown. Their content was the same, but they were from a different point of view.

Warlord’s camera function captured the world from multiple points of view. It was as if several cameras were filming the same scene from different angles. As the video wasn’t just from the player’s point of view, real movie-like scenes could be made.

At the same time, this feature acted as an excellent analysis tool

for players.

Analysis was at the core of Warlord. Although Warlord monsters were outstanding, they wouldn't escape the limits of their settings. No, they couldn't. If they did, it would no longer be a game. As such, all monsters showed some signs before executing a certain move, they had a definite pattern to their battles.

Of course, what An Jaehyun was analyzing now weren't monsters.

‘They’re getting better as the fight goes on...’

3 Skeleton Warriors, An Jaehyun was currently analyzing their battle.

‘But it’s still not enough.’

The Skeleton Warriors’ individual battle ability was actually above his expectation. He was amazed from the bottom of his heart. He even questioned, how did something like this go unnoticed until now?

On the other hand, they were far from perfect. Although they had potential, they still had tons to learn. It was An Jaehyun’s role to create a learning curriculum for them. As he had never done such a thing before, An Jaehyun could only let out a sigh.

‘If I took my classes just as serious, I would’ve been able to go to

college.'

Although he was saying this, in truth, An Jaehyun was happy to worry over such matters.

Once they learned and gained experience, they would one day show excellent battle ability.

That wasn't all.

'Well, no need for me to draw the aggro too long. Once I hit level 40, I can get my Golem to do it.'

Necromancers weren't just limited to Skeleton Warriors. There were Skeleton Magicians, Golems, and later he could even summon Death Knights. There were even rumors of necromancers being able to summon Bone Dragons.

At the very least, Hyrkan was certain that his battle videos would fundamentally change once he could summon Golems. As Golems had high HP and defense, Skeleton Warriors would have much wider movements with the Golem keeping the aggro.

The potential was there.

'I can take it all alone.'

Although troublesome, Hyrkan definitely saw the potential. The

potential to solo a raid!

Of course, there were still problems to solve.

The biggest of these now was...

“If only I had more money...”

Money.

Aside from having money to spare, he had to solve his debts first. He would soon hit the one month mark since his borrowed date, and he didn't have any money left on him. He had to really focus on making money. Before he could aggressively invest money into the game, he had to first pay his debts off.

‘Let's see.’

An Jaehyun headed to his YouTube page. His introduction video had reached well over 40,000 views, and his other videos were also steadily gaining views. Furthermore, he had reached 10,000 subscriber count.

An Jaehyun smiled.

‘Just looking at it makes my stomach full.’

Everything was going smoothly.

But it wasn't enough. He had to make content that would make these 10,000 subscribers happy to pay for his character, Hyrkan. He had to prove he was worthy of receiving their donations, that his character, Hyrkan, had the possibility of becoming a future hero and Ranker.

He had already shown the potential.

What was left...

‘Starting now, I’ll focus my videos on level-up speed than battles.’

Was result.



Warlord was full of news. Rather, people spent huge effort and numerous attempts to make the news. Although most turned to dust, some become worthy of headlines.

Hahoe Mask Hyrkan.

He was currently on the edge of making the news. The scene of a certain man watching his video was proof.

“Amazing.”

A blonde man clad in scarlet armor let out a heartfelt praise. Nearby, a red-haired woman discovered the man and approached him.

“What are you watching to give such praise?”

“Watch it for yourself.”

At the man’s retort, the woman pouted.

“Don’t you know you can’t watch other’s videos for security reasons?”

“Oh yeah.”

After making a face as if he had forgotten, the man told her the video’s identity.

“Hahoe Mask Hyrkan. I’m watching his battle video right now.”

Hearing the man’s words, the woman made a curious expression. This was the third time, the third time that she had heard the name Hahoe Mask Hyrkan from this man.

“You’re doing that pretty often these days.”

“This time, it’s a video of him fighting a Mud Troll. It went up two hours ago, titled ‘Level 20 Achieved.’ You can look it up at...”

“I’m not interested.”

The woman clicked her tongue.

“To be honest, I don’t know why other Rankers are so interested in this player. What’s there to him besides his concept? Hahoe mask and wacky leather fashion. Isn’t it kind of disgusting? If someone around me were to wear that, I’d never talk to him again.”

The man only made a wry smile. He couldn’t think of a way to respond to her statement.

“But he’s good at fighting. It’s a style you can’t see anywhere else.”

With that, the man touched the screen and rewound the video to the part he wanted. Then, he clicked the play button.

A hahoe mask wearing man in a hideous fashion was narrowly dodging the attacks of a Mud Troll. As he drew its aggro, lizard-skulled Skeleton Warriors attacked the Mud Troll one by one. Right flank, left flank. They showed perfectly executed attacks like the gears of a well-oiled machine.

In truth, it was nothing spectacular. Any coordinated team of players would be able to do so.

Only...

‘How did he raise his Skeleton Warriors for them to have such Combat AI? Were Skeleton Warriors’ Combat AIs always this excellent? No, other necromancers weren’t like this. Didn’t most of them defend first before attacking?’

They weren’t players, but rather, Skeleton Warriors. He couldn’t help but be surprised at such a feat. Fighting well alone and fighting well together were entirely different stories.

Of course, the blonde man knew that Warlord’s monsters and NPCs had superb AIs. If only in battles, they were much better than humans.

‘Plus, looking at his level, he hasn’t even played for long! How did he accomplish so much in such short time?’

Hahoe Mask Hyrkan had not played for long, and according to his research, it had only been a month since he started Warlord. Even so, he had managed to create Skeleton Warriors of this degree.

Then...

‘This is only the beginning. If these Skeleton Warriors...’

Given the time, the Skeleton Warriors' AI would improve further.

'If these Skeleton Warriors could move as well as Hyrkan himself...'

One day, these Skeleton Warriors might fight as well as their master.

What would happen then?

'How terrifying.'

The blonde haired man felt a shiver down his back.

The woman nearby shouted at the blonde haired man.

"Stop watching! Soon, it's time to hunt. We're going live in 5 minutes. Get up."

"Oh."

The blonde haired man got up, and the woman smacked the man's armored back.

"Stop caring about that small fry. You are Matador Chev,

Warlord's 9th Ranker and the leader of the Red Bulls. What you should be looking at is the peak, not the bottom."

At this, the man smiled lightly.

"Thanks for the compliment."

"If you're thankful, finish it within one try today. We sold 200,000 live tickets. People have paid 2 million dollars to watch your victory ceremony. Don't disappoint them."

The man nodded and fiddled his watch. He turned off the hologram window and materialized an item slot.

Then, a helmet appeared behind his neck, devouring his head. In the middle of the helmet with two frightening horns, the head of an enraged scarlet bull was engraved.

Watching the man's appearance, the red-haired woman shouted.

"Red Bulls, prepare for battle!"

Red Bulls.

Even amongst the Top 30 Guilds, they were Raid Specialists that placed in the top 5 for raids.

Chapter 26. Ahimbree (1)

[Hyrkan]

- Level: 20
- Class: Magician
- Title: 5
- Stats: Strength (116) Stamina (28) Intelligence (70) / Magic Power (71)

With the death of the Mud Troll, Hyrkan leveled up. After turning off the camera feature, he immediately checked his stats using his watch. Although he should have felt happy watching the numbers richer than before, his face didn't say so.

Hyrkan didn't stare at his stats for too long. He turned it off soon after and turned to the Skeleton Warriors that had just finished battling. The Skeleton Warriors were walking around, picking up pieces of their body that had fallen on the ground during a fight, and fitting them inside their bodies. Hyrkan gestured his finger toward himself, the 'COME HERE!' type of gesture.

However, the Skeleton Warriors did not react to this gesture. Hyrkan gestured again, this time pointing to the ground near his feet. The Skeleton Warriors stared at Hyrkan.

In the end, Hyrkan raised his voice.

“COME HERE! AROUND ME, NOW!”

Only then did the Skeleton Warriors quickly go near Hyrkan. As soon as they gathered, Hyrkan squatted down and drew five dots on the dirt.

“This is the Mud Troll we just killed. That’s you, that’s you, that’s you, and that’s me.”

Then, Hyrkan began to draw a line using the dots as a reference.

“Look here. If you approach the enemy from the back like this, obviously he’s going to react and turn around. Then what should the left and right flanks do? Hm? If the enemy turns to the right, the one on the left can attack; if the enemy turns to the left, the one on the right can attack. Move with that in mind!”

Hyrkan explained incessantly like a commander briefing the soldiers on his strategy.

The explanation didn’t end there. Hyrkan jumped up from the ground, then stretched his hands out towards one skeleton’s head.

Whish!

The Skeleton Warrior quickly dodged the attack. Because of Hyrkan’s training, they were always prepared to dodge attacks of all kinds.

Of course, now wasn’t one of those training.

“Oh, you dodged? Fine, that’s good. But why did you jump to dodge before? Do you have wings? Can you turn mid-air? You can’t, so why jump? Are you a frog?”

At Hyrkan’s words, the Skeleton Warriors still stared blankly at Hyrkan.

In truth, what Hyrkan was doing now was a waste of time. The Skeleton Warriors couldn’t understand strategies like this. Their Combat AI allowed them to gain experience only through battles, not through speech. Hyrkan knew this as well.

The reason he was doing so knowing this was as a form of self-reflection. He was explaining to himself. What went wrong and what needed work. Such self-reflections of his were rather long. Rambling on about this and that, Hyrkan graded his battle.

‘There’s just so much to fix. I wouldn’t even give it a 60 out of a 100.’

60 out of 100.

That was all Hyrkan could give to the battle just now.

Of course, Hyrkan wasn’t discouraged from this. He left his self-reflections as self-reflections and moved on.

‘At least, I can praise myself for hitting level 20 12 hours earlier than I thought.’

He had reached level 20, his top priority goal. Plus, he finished sooner than he expected!

He had created the result.

‘With this, the advertisement’s taken care of.’

No one would doubt someone who gave results.

At the very least, people would still be judging Hyrkan’s skill. During this pending status time, Hyrkan planned to control his pace.

Although it was important to focus on leveling up, there were many more harvests to be had in Warlord.

‘Alright, let’s head to Bangtz Castle.’

Now was the time to harvest them.



When the high walls of Bangtz Castle entered his vision...

“Slot On.”

Hyrkan changed his items.

His ugly leather clothes and unfashionable magician’s hat turned to the typical fashion of the Subjugation Association’s default clothing.

‘The shit I do because of this...’

In truth, people rarely changed their item slots just for the sake of fashion. The only exception were guild uniforms. In the first place, Slot Change had a cooldown time, and players were limited to just 3. As such, it was exceedingly inefficient to fill up one slot just for fashion.

Besides, Hyrkan was someone who had little to do with fashion. He would easily believe the word started with P.

However, not even Hyrkan would dare to wear such leather fashion in a place full of people. He may have held it in if it was just the leather pants, but he couldn’t possibly do so with both his leather top and magician’s hat. Even Hyrkan found himself disgusting.

‘Thank god I have a hahoe mask covering my face. Otherwise... uhew.’

In reality, his fashion helped his views and comments grow.

Although most comments made fun of his ridiculous outfit, any comment was a positive sign for him.

After switching his clothes, Hyrkan walked past Bangtz Castle's wide, open gate.

Immediately after he stepped past the castle gate, a crowd of guild recruiters surrounded Hyrkan.

“Hey, why not join our guild instead of being alone? We provide you with items and hunting support.”

“I’m surprised you made it this far in that. You won’t be so lucky next time, so why not join our guild? You’re going to die if you walk around alone.”

“You have to pay to get into our guild, but it’s well worth with the items we’ll provide you with. Come to our guild!”

“No, come to mine!”

It was incredibly annoying. Once Hyrkan snapped his hand out of one, another grabbed his wrist and asked him to join his guild.

Although most players received similar treatment, it was much more intense for Hyrkan.

‘What, do I have ‘pushover’ written on my face? Why does this

always happen to me?’

Hyrkan was used to such treatment, but it always left him with an unpleasant feeling.

In VR games, looks and physique were unimportant. Being treated so poorly with that being the case... in a way, it was truly a talent.

In any case, by the time Hyrkan arrived at the Magician Class Tower, his once happy expression had turned sour.

‘If only it were the old me... they would all be in the grave by now.’

Grumble grumble.

Like chewing gum, Hyrkan kept complaining to himself. The reason he came to the Class Tower was evident.

Free skill!

In Warlord, players received a free Normal-rank skill every 10 levels. In Hyrkan’s case, he received the Skeleton Fragment at level 1 and Demon Curse at level 10. It was the standard necromancer skill tree. Of course, the skill he needed to get at level 20 was decided as well.

Bone Armor.

It was a level 20 skill that required the Skeleton Fragment skill of at least E rank to learn. It was an all-purpose skill that could be used on both himself and his Skeleton Warriors.

Most importantly, it was a necessary skill to learn for his future. Skeleton Fragment at level 1, Bone Armor at level 20, and Skeleton Magician at level 30. Only after those skills became a certain rank could Golem Summoning be learned at level 40.

‘I’ll have to buy curse magic through skill books...’

As such, Hyrkan could only obtain curse magic through skill books.

However, curse magic was widespread to the point a separate class of curse magicians existed. As such, skill books were immensely costly.

‘Tsk. Money is the best alright.’

Thanks to his recent investments, Hyrkan had to count his food cost in 100 won units. Buying skill books were simply impossible for Hyrkan.

Hyrkan shook his head.



[You obtained the Bone Armor skill.]

After getting Bone Armor, Hyrkan immediately headed to Bangtz Castle's Subjugation Association Branch.

When he arrived, guild recruiters began to irritate Hyrkan as if it was the most natural thing to do.

This time, however, Hyrkan's face remained unchanged. He maintained his serious expression until he stepped inside the Subjugation Association Branch.

'The once in a lifetime opportunity is here.'

This matter was much more important than the free skill.

'I have to form a relationship with Ahimbree.'

It was important to obtain a skill book from Ahimbree, but Hyrkan didn't want to end their relationship there. He wanted to receive further quests from Ahimbree.

Warlord's NPCs were passive. Before players asked them directly, NPCs would rarely seek out players for help. If Hyrkan wanted something from Ahimbree, he had to understand what Ahimbree wanted and dig into it. He had to understand the meaning of each

and every word he spoke.

It was something Hyrkan wasn't confident about. Although Hyrkan was one hell of a fighter, he was less than average in the art of conversation. If Warlord were a game like reality and NPCs were shrewd like humans, Hyrkan would have a huge problem on his hands.

‘Alright.’

After resolving himself, Hyrkan waited for his turn at the Subjugation Association's counter.

“Would anyone like to join a level 25 Rare quest?”

“We're looking for a magician to quest with!”

As always, the Subjugation Association had a market-like atmosphere. When his turn came in this disorderly place, Hyrkan spoke to the NPC at the counter.

“I came here on Sir Botan's recommendation. He told me to show you this letter.”

The NPC smiled in response.

“Please go up to the 7th floor.”

The situation progressed in a breeze. As soon as Hyrkan was told to do so, he headed to the staircase to head to the 7th floor. In front of the staircase leading up were NPCs standing guard. Hyrkan showed them Hotan's recommendation letter, and they immediately made way.

Then, when Hyrkan was about to head up.

“Huh? Why are you blocking me?”

“We need an authentication.”

“Authentication? Didn't he just pass by? What authentication?”

“That man is my friend. We're together.”

It became loud where Hyrkan passed by. The few players that were tailing Hyrkan were stopped by the NPCs.

As soon as Hyrkan heard their voices, he knit his brows.

‘There are hyenas no matter where you go.’

It wasn't a particularly nice sound. If other players seemed to be doing something special, these hyena-like players tailed them and tried to steal it from them. It went without saying that their sound wasn't pleasant to anyone.

When their plans went awry, these people didn't hesitate to PK. They were sensitive to the smell of profit, and they didn't hesitate to turn to violence and ill-mannered play to get their ways.

‘Guys like those are the most dangerous.’

Leaving behind the Hyenas' cries, Hyrkan headed up to the 7th floor. A hallway, filled with several doors, appeared in front of him. As he passed by each door, Hyrkan read the words written on the door.

‘Ahimbree!’

Once he found the word he was looking for, he stopped and knocked on the door.

Knock, knock, screech!

As soon as Hyrkan knocked, the door opened, and a 360 square feet office met his gaze.

‘What a mess.’

In what couldn't be called a large office, numerous books and documents were littered around the floor. Like Hyrkan described, the room was a total mess, going past the point of just being cramped.

To exaggerate a little, there was only enough space for a single person to pass through, and at the end of that space was a desk and a bearded man seemingly in his mid-40s. The man was staring at Hyrkan, looking past the glasses sitting on the bridge of his nose.

Hyrkan immediately bent down on his waist and introduced himself.

“My name is Hyrkan.”

‘I can’t believe I’m meeting THE Ahimbree.’

Ahimbree.

He was someone Hyrkan had only seen in videos. That was how hard it was to see him.

It wasn’t possible to film NPCs in private spaces like the room Hyrkan was currently in. As such, only when Ahimbree made a public appearance could players have the chance to see his face. However, he was an incredible expert incomparable to ordinary players. He rarely came out to the public. Simply put, if he ever came out, he would solve whatever problem he needed to by himself. There was nothing for players to do.

“I heard you’re here on Hotan’s recommendation.”

When Hyrkan finished his greeting and stood back up, the conversation began.

“Yes.”

Hyrkan walked up to him and handed him the recommendation letter. After reading the letter, Ahimbree stored it in his desk drawer.

“Looks like you’re quite skilled. I know Hotan’s standards are rather high.”

“He only favored me a little.”

“Just because Hotan favored you, there’s no reason for me to do the same, don’t you agree?”

As soon as Ahimbree asked,

“Of course.”

Hyrkan nodded his head and smoothly continued the conversation.

“If you just give me a chance, I will prove to you my skill and potential.”

Hyrkan spoke very straightforwardly. If he acted this way in the real world, he would receive suspicious glares first and foremost.

However, to Warlord's NPCs, such to-the-point straightforwardness worked. Otherwise, one's data would remain in the NPC's database for a few hours, then get erased. That's how difficult it was to establish a relationship with NPCs. Having played Warlord for so long, Hyrkan knew this better than anybody else.

Of course, Hyrkan's actions worked.

As he stared at Hyrkan, Ahimbree made a devilish smile, one clear enough to be seen through his shaggy beard.

“My standards are incomparably higher compared to Hotan's.”

“If I cannot meet your expectations, I can only blame myself.”

“The smell of a black magician is heavy on you.”

With that, Ahimbree knocked on his desk two times. Then, a book rose up from the pile of books and flew towards Hyrkan like a butterfly. Hyrkan grabbed the book and examined its cover.

[Madness Helm]

Hyrkan tilted his head.

‘What's this?’

He had never heard of the name before. It wasn't anywhere in the list of skills provided by Helgen.

However, Hyrkan didn't have too much time to ponder.

“That is a present from Hotan. That will be the end of that.”

[The quest, ‘Ahimbree’s Teachings’, has been completed.]

“Now begins my talk. I am only looking for one type of people right now, and that is someone to fight against the Power of Corruption.”

[The quest, ‘Nested Egg’, begins.]

The successive sound of alerts caused Hyrkan to clench his fist inside his mind.

‘This is what I love about Warlord. It doesn't throw any underhanded tricks at you.’

However, Hyrkan's happiness did not last long.

“You only have one chance. If you can't pass this test, it will be difficult for you to ever meet me again. By the way, of the ones who have come to see me on Hotan's recommendations, only 19 have passed my test.”

‘Huh?’

Ahimbree’s statement meant 19 others had passed the test ahead of him. Also, although 19 had passed his test, at least twice that number should have tried for the test.

‘Damn.’

There was no way Hyrkan wouldn’t know what this meant.

‘Looks like I’ll be stepping on a tail.’

Chapter 27. Ahimbree (2)

[Bone Armor]

- Proficiency: Rank F
- Summonable Parts: Breastplate
- Use: Register a personal sign. Execute the sign to activate the spell.

[Madness Helm]

- Proficiency: Rank F
- Summonable Helm Count: 1
- Use: Draw a seal on the target's head. Chant to activate the spell.

Sitting on the staircase leading up to the Subjugation Association Branch building and checking the skills he just received, Hyrkan looked incredibly shabby. It was as if he had just been kicked out of his house.

However, unlike his shabby appearance, Hyrkan's eyes were shining with excitement stronger than ever before.

‘Madness Helm, this skill...’

As he had known about Bone Armor beforehand, there was nothing to be surprised about. What made Hyrkan so excited was none other than the skill given by Ahimbree, Madness Helm.

‘At just F-rank, it has a 1.2 times stat increase?’

Madness Helm.

Hyrkan had never heard of the skill before, even before returning to the past. It was part of the necromancer summon skill-tree, meaning it was non-mainstream. Plus, it could only be obtained through Ahimbree, and the skill book became bounded to the owner, unable to be traded. It wasn't too surprising that it was unrecognizable.

‘Some of Rich Lich's summons were wearing odd helmets... is this that?’

Of course, Hyrkan had probably taken a glimpse of the skill before in videos. It was just that he would not have been able to recognize it.

In any case, its effect was amazing.

Any summons equipped with Madness Helm would have its stats increased by 1.2 times. Not many buff skills had such high increase at just F-rank proficiency.

‘I wonder how high it will be at A-rank.’

Necromancer's summons could not receive beneficiary skills from priests. As such, necromancers had to rely on their buff skills and debuff skills to fight. Moreover, buff skills were much more

valuable than items.

‘The problem will be in actual battles.’

It was a good skill.

The only concern was that Skeleton Warriors equipped with Madness Helm would go mad as the skill name implied, and fight as they wanted. If that were the case, Hyrkan would have a hard time making a decision on whether to use it or not. That said, it did not change the fact that it was a good skill.

‘That’s that.’

Hyrkan turned off the skill window. Then, he immediately checked his new quest using his watch.

[Nested Egg]

- Quest Rank: Unique
- Quest Level Range: None
- Quest Content: Find an egg in a nest.
- Quest Reward: None

‘God...’

It was an extremely bland quest. In fact, it was too bland that Hyrkan didn’t know where to start. Hyrkan’s held out his lips like

a bird's beak as his expression turned sullen.

‘Warlord really knows no limits.’

Warlord's quests were often like this. As quest rewards and quest importance increased, quest content went past the level of being unkind to the level of making players go insane.

In a way, it was to balance out the game. Warlord had an enormous player base. With players shared information online, their information power was just too strong. If this information were carefully controlled, even the most difficult quest became easy. Only when the quest content seemed as impossible as this one, did players truly call a quest ‘hard.’

Hyrkan clicked his tongue twice and ended his dissatisfaction with the quest there. It was not the first time he had done a quest like this. There was no need to complain at this point.

Moreover, the problem Hyrkan had to face now was not the Madness Helm skill nor the Nested Egg quest.

‘The problem now are those tigers waiting outside.’

Ahimbree was one of Warlord's core NPCs.

He even played a vital role in the Corrupt Count scenario quest, which was a hot issue for even the Top 30 Guilds and Warlord veterans.

It was not rare for guilds to station observers around important NPCs like Ahimbree.

It wasn't something that happened in most games, but in Warlord, a game where an enormous amount of money was involved, it was different. Most importantly, spying, stalking, and blackmailing were not crimes in Warlord. There was no risk involved in doing such things.

‘I can't run away either since there's only one exit.’

After thinking about it for a little, Hyrkan stood up as if he had come to a decision and brushed the dust off his butt.

‘It's not like I'm going to get an answer just by sitting here. Plus, they won't know I met with Ahimbree.’

Hyrkan climbed down the staircase.



The moment Hyrkan came down to the crowded 1st floor, a few players that had been monitoring the stairs stood up. They were the hyenas that had tried to follow Hyrkan in before.

Hyrkan also noticed their presence.

‘Hmph, a bunch of idiots looking for a free lunch.’

Hyrkan had no intention of giving them any information for free. Most importantly, PK was banned within the Subjugation Association. The moment a fight broke out, Subjugation Association NPCs would make their move. Only a few players in the entirety of Warlord could be their match at this point.

The real problem would be when he stepped outside the town. Even so, any mediocre experts would only be a sacrifice for Hyrkan.

At Hyrkan’s current state of level 20, his current PK battle ability was peerless. It wouldn’t be strange for him to want others to provoke him once he stepped outside the castle.

“Move.”

At that moment, a lion made his appearance through the pack of hyenas.

“What?”

It was a rough entrance, as the man grabbed the shoulder of the player following Hyrkan and jerked him backward.

The one on the receiving end couldn’t feel happy about it. Of course, if he were wise, he would understand the difference in strength stat by noticing how easily he was pulled backward.

However, such a wise and skillful player wouldn't be left to stand watch at the Subjugation Association, wasting his valuable time and scheming to eat others' leftovers.

The player who was pulled back scowled, glaring at the player who pulled him by his shoulder.

Their eyes met.

Then...

"Fuck off."

An uninterested sound came out.

The speaker was a man with a small stature, only about 160cm in height. However, his armor was a different story. It was an armor seemingly made of white snake scales. From the helmet all the way down to the boots, the man was adorned with a full set of armor made from the same material. What stood out the most were the decorations on the shoulders. The decorations were snake heads, making the armor's wearer look like his shoulders were coming out of the snakes' mouths.

It was an undoubtedly impressive design. With just a glimpse, one would be unable to forget it easily.

Because of this, the few players who had seen the armor before easily recognized the identity of the items.

‘White Mamba set!’

White Mamba.

It was a level 80 boss monster that had been killed just 4 weeks ago. To kill this 40-meter-long snake with huge, white scales, three guilds had cooperated with each other. The live raid sold over 300,000 tickets. Although the ticket cost was on the cheaper side, it was still a fine amount.

Also, as expected from a large-sized boss monster, the White Mamba dropped large amounts of crafting coins. Afterward, one of Warlord’s famous item designers personally designed 22 full armor sets.

One entire armor set was 50 million won! Moreover, it had a level requirement of at least 70.

It wasn’t something made to be sold to ordinary players.

It was a luxury item meant to be owned by a small minority. It was equivalent to a tiger’s stripes or a lion’s mane in wildlife. Hyenas could only waggle their tails the moment they saw it.

“Ah, I’m sorry.”

The hyena who had wanted to pick a fight immediately lowered its tail, and the surrounding gaze concentrated on the man.

“Isn’t that a White Mamba set?”

“A level 70+ player? Whoa!”

There was no way a high-level player, especially one comparable to a Ranker, wouldn’t draw the attention of everyone nearby. In such situation, the man in the White Mamba set approached Hyrkan.

“Let me borrow a bit of your time.”

It was a request Hyrkan couldn’t refuse.



Their conversation was short.

“In what floor did you receive your quest?”

“The 3rd floor. Why?”

“What kind of quest did you receive?”

“Why would I hand over my valuable quest information to you for free?”

“Are you part of a guild?”

“Do I have an obligation to tell you? Why should I tell you that? What if you’re from a different guild?”

Hyrkan had already prepared for such a situation. Although he didn’t expect a level 70+ player to come, it wasn’t enough to cause him to panic.

Hyrkan knew what he had to do.

‘From this moment on, I have never met or seen Ahimbree. I’m just a regular player who coincidentally obtained a quest here.’

Hyrkan had two choices.

First was to pretend he was part of a guild, while the other was to pretend he knew absolutely nothing. At first, he planned to use the former. The hyenas easily went away once they heard guild names they recognized.

However, once a level 70+ player appeared, Hyrkan had no choice but to go with the other plan. After all, if he sold a guild’s name and he had some relationship to that guild, he would have been in trouble.

In any case, what was important was that Hyrkan could not let anyone find out he contacted Ahimbree.

‘Ahimbree is currently playing a vital role in the Corrupt Count scenario. If anyone found out I was related to him, they would resort to any means to grab onto my tail.’

Ahimbree was important enough for guild executives to go so far as to mess with a single player. Thus, once people began doubting Hyrkan, things would become incomparably more annoying.

‘Anyways, who’s this?’

On the other hand, Hyrkan couldn’t help but wonder who he was talking to. The face behind the helmet wasn’t one Hyrkan recognized. The White Mamba set required a certain level of money and connection to obtain. A level 70+ user with such set should be a Ranker class, but Hyrkan had no recollection of the man’s face.

Suddenly, the man put out his hand.

“Sorry for taking your time. Excuse me.”

The hand he offered for a shake was none other than his left hand, which Hyrkan grabbed with a face full of irritation.

“You did all this just to shake my hand? What, does being high-leveled give you some sort of authority? Next time you do this, I’m going to take a video and upload it. I’ll let you go this time.”

After shaking his hand for a bit, Hyrkan let go.

“Then I’m leaving. That’s it, right?”

The man only stared silently.



The moment Hyrkan left the scene, another player approached the man in the White Mamba set.

It was a female player giving off a masculine aura. Wearing a magician’s robe, the woman stared where Hyrkan had left.

“Looks like he’s unrelated to Ahimbree.”

“At the very least, he hasn’t played Warlord for long. If he did, he wouldn’t have accepted my left-hand shake so easily.”

With that, the man brushed off his left hand as if he had touched something dirty.

“What a waste of time. I came all the way out here thinking I was

called for something important.”

“Hmm.”

“Does it even matter anymore? The Corrupt Count quest is going to end soon. Plus, someone with the Rising Star title who passed Ahimbree’s test hasn’t appeared in 3 months. There won’t be any more. Even if one did come out, it’s too late at this point. It won’t... have any effect on the flow of things. There’s no need to recruit anyone new.”

“You’re right.”

“Alright then. I’ll fill out the report, so let’s go back to our usual spot.”

“Yes, sir.”

“See you later then.”

After finishing up their conversation, the two of them immediately left the scene. Far off in the distance, someone had been watching the two attentively.

‘There was another one?’

It was Hyrkan who had been hiding in secret. After pretending to leave, he immediately headed to a spot where he could observe the

man. There, he saw one become two, and two become zero.

‘Seeing as how he baited me with his left hand, those fuckers are something.’

The moment the man in the White Mamba set offered a handshake with his left hand, Hyrkan knew.

He wasn’t normal.

Long time Warlord players didn’t shake hands with their left. They felt an instinctive repulsion at the thought of someone nearing their watch. Even if they did, they hesitated. They would first observe the other party to figure out their intentions. Left hand handshakes weren’t normal in the first place. Handshakes were usually done with the right. Not unless the person was a Jimmy Hendrix fan.

‘Who are they?’

In any case, Hyrkan offered him his left hand to understand his intentions and to show his inexperience. Only someone who had played the game for an extremely long time like Hyrkan could make such a split second decision.

However, this was only the beginning of Hyrkan’s concern.

‘If I were to continue Ahimbree’s quest, I might run into them again...’

Although he had passed by the situation, if he were to run into them in the future, he wouldn't be so lucky.

Then should he abandon Ahimbree's test?

‘Hmph.’

Of course not.

‘Whatever. I'm going to have deal with those fuckers just now or the other fuckers later anyways.’

If he were to run away after being intimidated, he wouldn't have chosen to walk the path of solo play.

Moreover, Ahimbree's test was something he had to pass. The merit was just too big to give up.

‘I can only go for it. Even if I fail, I'll try at the very least.’

Chapter 28. Ahimbree (3)

“Nest, nest, nest.”

Looking up information on his tablet PC, An Jaehyun sipped on his coffee. Thanks to the caffeine, An Jaehyun’s slow head began to roll.

‘So there’s 3 potential areas.’

Bring an egg from a nest!

Although it sounded like an absurd quest, An Jaehyun had his ways from his long time experience with Warlord.

First, he narrowed down the potential areas. Ahimbree was currently staying in Bangtz Castle. Then, it was likely that the quest area was located near Bangtz Castle.

From here, the words ‘egg’ and ‘nest’ were extremely helpful hints. The target monster was likely to be birds, reptiles, or insects.

“Cave Snake Cliff, Lizard Swamp, Sawtooth Ant Tunnel.”

Amongst numerous hunting grounds near Bangtz Castle, only three fit the requirements. Of course, these were only the known hunting grounds, and it is possible for there to be hidden hunting

grounds. In the first place, players did not disclose the best hunting grounds to the public. Whether it be guilds or players, they used whatever means necessary to monopolize good hunting grounds.

Luckily, An Jaehyun already knew where to go.

‘Cave Snakes are over level 50, and you have to be around level 40 to hunt Sawtooth Ants.’

The Cave Snake Cliff was a level 50 hunting ground, and the Sawtooth Ant Tunnel was a level 40 hunting ground. Even if one of them was Ahimbree’s testing place, An Jaehyun couldn’t do anything about it now.

Then, there was only one choice left.

‘It has to be the Lizard Swamp.’

Lizard Swamp.

That would be his next destination. It was a place a level 30 monster called Green Lizards appeared.

The hunting ground itself wasn’t bad. Given An Jaehyun’s abilities, although Lizard Warriors may be difficult, Green Lizards weren’t a problem. Plus, lizards weren’t monsters players preferred. They were rather difficult to kill for average players. This was because they fought like human beings, just like

werewolves. Not only that, but they also carried weapons and wore armors.

It was possible to kill them if need be, but no players went out of their way to make it more difficult for themselves.

On the other hand, they were good targets if one knew the hunting method and had the skills to back it up. Even if it weren't for a test, it would have been a fine hunting ground for An Jaehyun.

As such, it could be said that he was killing two birds with one stone. He would be leveling up and investigating the quest.

The problem was filming.

'If it was Ahimbree's quest area...'

Any videos from the Lizard Swamp hunting ground was likely to be investigated.

Also, Hyrkan had already revealed receiving the Rising Star title through his video. Someone confirmed to have the Rising Star title appearing at what's expected to be Ahimbree's testing ground? It was a good scenario to be suspected.

Even back then, An Jaehyun only slid by because he was wearing the Subjugation Association's default clothes. If he were wearing his hahoe mask, he would have been suspected whether he

accepted the left handshake or not.

“Damn.”

‘Those shitheads are making this harder than it has to be.’

In truth, An Jaehyun had not expected to be worrying about such things. He was fine with hyenas. In fact, it would have been stranger for there to be no hyenas considering the scale of the quest he was doing.

However, what was on his tail weren’t hyenas. What was worse was that An Jaehyun didn’t know whether they were lions or tigers.

‘Who are they?’

One thing was for sure; they were predators.

‘White Mamba set... there’s no way he’s just a high-leveled player. He has to be a Ranker.’

But he didn’t know what species they were. It wasn’t just because An Jaehyun couldn’t remember them.

Looking at just the options, it would be hard to say that the White Mamba set was an incomparably amazing set. However, 3 guilds had collaborated to kill the White Mamba, and a famous

designer had been hired to make the set. Same bags would have different pricing if one had a brand name logo on it.

Usually, items like these weren't sold at a known price. Guilds would give out these items as presents to their sponsors or friends, or they would keep it as a symbolic uniform.

In other words, it was easy to trace back.

However, that man couldn't be traced back. Someone wearing such a pompous set didn't leave any trace of himself online. If he came from a famous guild, An Jaehyun could relax and act accordingly, but it wasn't the case now.

That was why An Jaehyun was so excessively cautious.

His intuition was telling him so.

'There's no way someone who tests people like that has a clean background.'

If he were part of the Top 30 Guilds or forces that rivaled them, he wouldn't have acted as he had.

He would have revealed his guild and offered up a trade. Even that should have been done by a messenger, not a Ranker. High-level players invested most of their playtime in hunting. It was a waste of time to talk and negotiate with suspicious players.

‘There’s no way he’s from the Top 30 Guilds. I’ve never seen any of the Top 30 Guilds act like that.’

From An Jaehyun’s standards, he wasn’t from the Top 30 Guilds.

‘He’s part of some organization, though...’

But he was sure that he was part of an organization. The other player who had been hiding while Hyrkan was talking was proof.

With those unfit to be part of Warlord’s world going after him, An Jaehyun’s headaches were only justified.

Irritated, An Jaehyun scratched his head.

“Damn it.”

‘Why do I have to worry about this? I have enough on my hands with just the game alone. I’m going to go crazy because of bitches like that Choi Sulyeon. Where did these weird shitheads come from?’

Nothing is easy in this world.

An Jaehyun once again remembered the saying.



Lizard Swamp.

This hunting ground that most players avoided was located north of Bangtz Castle. Based on travel speed of most players, it was situated about 5 hours away. It wasn't a short distance. No one was interested in doing a cross country run without actual gaming.

It was the same for Hyrkan. It wasn't likely to run into a pleasant surprise just because he rushed to the Lizard Swamp. It was better to take care of things on the way there.

“Let's see.”

Hyrkan's current action of fiddling with a Skeleton Warrior's head was also part of 'taking care of things on the way there.'

‘So I just have to draw it here?’

After messing around with the head for a little bit, Hyrkan used magic. He drew a cross-shaped seal on the back of a Skeleton Warrior's head, and the cross made its appearance with a scarlet glow.

The seal?

‘Next, I have to activate the magic.’

It was, of course, the Unique magic skill, Madness Helm.

After drawing the seal, Hyrkan slapped the Skeleton Warrior on the back of its head. The Skeleton Warrior then stepped forward, scratching its head as it stared at Hyrkan.

At that moment,

Whoosh!

Hyrkan's left fist flew like an arrow towards the Skeleton Warrior's head. It was a perfect jab. Delivered with absolute conciseness, it looked as if his fist moved separately from his body.

Hyrkan didn't just throw a jab. He stepped forward and closed their distance as he did.

Even so, the Skeleton Warrior tilted its head and dodged the jab. As it did, the Skeleton Warrior immediately distanced itself from Hyrkan. Watching this happen, Hyrkan let out a light smile.

‘I know I’m the one who taught it, but it grew well.’

In the past, it would simply get hit. Even if it did dodge, it only dodged the jab.

Now, however, it even distanced itself and prepared for the next

to come.

Not to mention, Hyrkan's blows were much faster than when he was level 10. Being able to react to such a fast attack showed how far it had come. It was the result of Hyrkan training them for over 30 minutes every day.

Next problem.

‘Will it maintain its evasion even with the Madness Helm buff?’

One could tell from just its name that Madness Helm was far from the word ‘calm.’ Once a Skeleton Warrior received this buff, even a complete newbie would guess that it would turn aggressive.

For most summons, excessive aggression was a merit. However, it was different for Hyrkan's summons. It was fine to turn aggressive, but it had to maintain Hyrkan's teachings. If it were only aggressive, it would have gone back to square one.

“Helm On.”

Hyrkan chanted.

Immediately afterward, the scarlet seal on the back of the Skeleton Warrior's head glowed.

Crack!

Along with a strange sound, two horns the size of adult male's fists sprouted out from the Skeleton Warrior's head. The blue flames in its eyes also turned red as they grew. The flames blazed, seemingly about to burst out of its eyes at any moment.

Finally, the Skeleton Warrior opened its mouth. It looked like it couldn't control its blood boiling, though such a thing should be impossible.

Watching the Skeleton Warrior, Hyrkan smiled. Then, he pulled out his sword from the scabbard on his waist.

Ching!

With the sound of a sword being pulled out, Hyrkan charged towards the Skeleton Warrior with all his power. He closed the distance in one breath and swung his sword with the intent of severing the Skeleton Warrior's head.

Swish!

The sword made a crescent trace as it swung through the air.

The Skeleton Warrior dodged the swing by lightly tilting its head back. Hyrkan didn't watch the scene. The moment the Skeleton Warrior tilted its head back, Hyrkan used the swing's centrifugal force to spin his body. Using his left foot as a pivot, his right leg drew a circle. Hyrkan's right foot approached the Skeleton

Warrior's body with a heavy sound.

Whish!

The Skeleton Warrior dodged the spinning back round kick by bending its body backward. After tilting its head and bending its body backward, the Skeleton Warrior straightened the bow-bent body once again.

Watching this, Hyrkan stopped his movements.

‘Oh?’

What entered Hyrkan's eyes was the appearance of a Skeleton Warrior that did not falter back and stood its ground.

‘It won't back off?’

Knowing no retreat on a battlefield*. [TN: Korean idiom]

Although it would evade attacks, the Skeleton Warrior was determined never to retreat.

Watching this, a big smile appeared on Hyrkan's face.

‘This could be useful...’



As the popularity of Warlord increased, its guilds, including the Top 30 Guilds, struggled to recruit more people. With this shortage of manpower, it went without saying that guilds raced to recruit promising players. [TN: ‘promising player’ here and in other places is the same word used for the ‘Rising Star’ in the Rising Star title.]

Lately, the competition to recruit these ‘promising players’ was fiercer than ever. What caused this were the words ‘1 year anniversary.’

In Warlord, it was difficult for latecomers to catch up to the front-runners. In such situation, the words ‘1 year anniversary’ served as a mental cutline. It is impossible for anyone starting after the 1 year anniversary to catch up to the Rankers! Such was what all Rankers believed.

In other words, promising players recruited before this 1 year anniversary were the last rookies who could challenge the Rankers.

Such was the background story behind why Choi Sulyeon was currently looking through a list of players with potential. She looked over the selected players’ battle videos and history. Most were players who were known to be skilled in other games and had now gotten used to VR games.

Their talent and potential couldn’t be called bad.

However.

“There’s over 10 million people in the VR game world now. How come there isn’t a single useful one?”

Choi Sulyeon was unsatisfied with the list of promising players. She didn’t look satisfied either.

In truth, it wasn’t her job to go over promising players one by one. Although she watched YouTube videos from time to time, it was more for a change of pace than for recruiting promising players. With that being the case, she couldn’t be happy with the current situation.

No one entered her eyes. Looking for a gem in a pile of stones was only worthwhile if a gem was found. With nothing but stones, it was hard to find the motivation.

In response to Choi Sulyeon’s thorny complaint, her secretary, Park Suji, quickly worked her brain.

‘Young miss is more annoyed than usual. She must have a standard in mind.’

As a secretary of 5 years, Park Suji quickly figured out Choi Sulyeon’s mind.

“Is there someone you have in mind?”

At her question, Choi Sulyeon knit her brows.

Did she have someone in mind? She did.

Except, the skilled players in her mind belonged to other guilds.

Desiring them was no different than desiring bread within a painting. The money wasn't the problem. Amongst the Top 30 Guilds was a gentleman's agreement. At the core of this agreement was player transfer. It was fine if it was something both sides wanted, but a one-sided theft meant war.

But other than these skilled players, there was no one she had in mind.

No...

‘What was it?’

She remembered a face. No, it was hard to say ‘face.’ After all, she had never seen his face.

There was only one thing she knew.

“Hahoe mask.”

“Excuse me?”

Park Suji tilted her head, while Choi Sulyeon finally understood the cause of her irritation.

“There’s a guy wearing a hahoe mask who uploads videos to YouTube. Look him up. Get rid of the data for these other guys.”

Hahoe mask.

With just one clue, Park Suji nodded her head.

“Yes, miss.”

“By the way, did the Helpers respond yet?”

“No, not yet.”

“What an amazing bunch. The audacity on those guys... oh well, we’ll contact them first. Ask them exactly when and who they’ll dispatch. We’ve got a raid soon, so get an answer as soon as possible. If they’re late, you can threaten them with my name.”

“Yes, miss.”

“Also, I’m going to work out in 30 minutes so tell the trainer to

get ready. I'll eat afterward, what's the menu?"

"It's Korean beef steak salad. The coffee is the Jamaica Blue Mountain you wanted."

"Anything else?"

"That's all."

That's all.

With that, Choi Sulyeon's complexion changed. She made serious, grave expression.

"The President?"

"He hasn't said anything."

Hasn't said anything. Hearing that, a slight smile came out of her stiff expression.

"Looks like father and mother aren't saying anything since Warlord's getting so popular. Feels like just yesterday they tried to force me into marriage just because I was spending some money on a game."

After reminiscing for a bit, Choi Sulyeon got up from her seat. As

she was wearing her thin pajamas, her glamorous, model-like figure showed. Seeing her figure and look, her secretary, Park Suji, felt envy from the bottom of her heart.

‘Life sure is unfair. I don’t know who it’s going to be, but whoever marries the miss in the future must have saved a country in his past life.’

Chapter 29. Lizard Swamp (1)

No players hated easy-to-hunt, experience-rich, and item-rewarding monsters.

However, players naturally flocked to hunting grounds where monsters like these spawned. For Warlord, which had difficulty incomparable to those of normal console or PC games, it was much worse. Furthermore, Warlord's death penalty was greater than in normal games. It was only natural for players to choose safe and easy hunting grounds.

But once one experienced being in a hunting ground where there were more players than monsters, and experienced getting into conflict with another party over a monster, a thought must have crossed his mind.

That rather than just looking at other players, it'd be better to hunt in unpopular areas.

Of course, when such thought was carried to action, most ended up seeing blood.

“Fuck! I told you, we shouldn't have come here!”

“You're the one who suggested it!”

Two players currently crossing a swamp was exactly in such a situation. They weren't originally two. No parties came to hunting

grounds with only two. If there was such a case, one or two members must have died, and the two remaining must be on the run.

Having lost their friends, no good words came out of the mouths of the two players running away.

“What kind of a hunting ground is this? Fuck!”

“Can you stop saying ‘fuck’? Do you need to say that in every sentence?”

“What? Want to fight?”

In a situation where foul language went back and forth, it was only natural for a fight to break out.

In that sense, the Lizard Swamp served as a good hunting ground for party members to reaffirm their relationships.

Lizard Swamp was a level 30 hunting ground where Green Lizardmen spawned. However, players ranked Lizard Swamp as a late level 30 to an early level 40 hunting ground. There were two reasons for its high difficulty rating.

First, Lizardmen were hard monsters to hunt. As they walked on two legs and carried swords, they were a vastly different type of monster from the usual. That said, they didn’t fight like humans either. As such, no one had any experience with their fighting

style. One could only experience fighting with monsters like Lizardmen in VR games like Warlord.

The second reason was the nature of the swamp environment. In swamps, it's much harder to fight or to run away. If a battle didn't go as planned, the entire situation quickly became worse. For this reason, tank-type players were much more prone to dying in swamps.

However, setting aside these two reasons, the attack, defense, and stamina of Lizardmen weren't particularly higher than normal.

In other words, if one had the experience and ability to deal with these problems, the Lizard Swamp would be a good hunting ground.

‘Is this the next point?’

Hyrkan checked the ground as he rolled his ankle. The ground only left a light footprint, proving its hardness.

‘Alright, here's point C.’

Hard ground.

That was the core idea behind hunting in swamp areas. Rather than thinking of how to fight in swamps, one needed to think about how to get rid of the disadvantageous effects of swamps.

Further, it was better to have multiple areas that could do so. Once these areas were found, players would need to plan their activities around them.

It was the basics of hunting. Just like how fishermen knew where to fish, players needed to know the best places to hunt. Jumping straight into hunting grounds without knowing where to fight was simply foolish.

Players then needed to know how to lure their prey into their areas. In Warlord, it was extremely important to know how to lure monsters. Tanks with excellent luring ability often received special treatment from guilds and parties.

With that said, luring was not Hyrkan's specialty. Luckily, it was easy to aggro Lizardmen. Luring them wouldn't take extra effort.

‘What a shame.’

Because of this, Hyrkan felt rather disappointed as he made his preparation in the Lizard Swamp.

‘If I made a highlight video of me hunting here, I would easily hit 10,000 views.’

Many signs hinted that his fights would be easy. There weren't many Lizardmen, and there were many areas he could use. It was easy to tell that Lizard Swamp's difficulty level was exaggerated.

Enough conditions were met to make a good video.

Even so, Hyrkan had to restrain himself.

‘I can’t believe I have to suffer so much because of shitheads I don’t know about.’

Hyrkan just did not have the ability to make enemies of famous or high-level players.

‘Fine.’

He could only hold it in.

Of course...

‘You’re all dead when I become a Ranker.’

Hyrkan didn’t plan on holding himself back forever. He was progressing at an excellent pace. He had the foundations to grow faster than he could have ever imagined in the past.

Once he had enough power and ability, everything would change.

Thinking about the future, Hyrkan smirked.

As he did, he took out and wore his hahoe mask.



A green-scaled Lizardman flickered its tongue as it glared at the enemy in front of it. In front of its eyes stood a Skeleton Warrior with a Lizardman skull.

The two only glared at each other with their swords held out in front. They showed no signs of wanting to clash.

What urged these two on...

Snap snap!

Was the sound of finger snaps.

Once the sound rang out, the Skeleton Warrior made its move. It held its sword up as it lightly and quickly closed its distance with the Lizardman. Then, it slashed down.

Clang!

The Lizardman did not hesitate to fend off the Skeleton Warrior's sword.

Immediately after it hit its sword away, the Lizardman swung its sword towards the Skeleton Warrior's chest. The Skeleton Warrior bent his body back to dodge the attack and began stepping

backward to distance itself from the Lizardman.

The Lizardman had no plans of letting it get away. It followed the backstepping Skeleton Warrior and swung its sword. In order to block the slash, the Skeleton Warrior swung its sword.

Clang!

A metallic sound rang out once again as the two swords exchanged blows.

Within the metallic sound...

“Helm On.”

A chant was heard.

“Bone Armor.”

Watching the battle, Hyrkan chanted. Then, two horns spouted out of the Skeleton Warrior’s forehead. Its rib cage and spine began to expand, and the previously empty insides of the rib cage began filling in. The Skeleton Warrior transformed, looking as if it was wearing a white plate armor.

At the same time, the Skeleton Warrior’s flame eyes turned from blue to red.

Its aura changed as well.

Unlike before, it stepped forward and began swinging its sword aggressively.

Clang, clang!

The Lizardman did not dodge this abrupt swarm of attacks. It also swung its sword and fought back.

The continuous metallic ringing only stopped when their swords stopped in deadlock.

Kiik!

The screech of interlocked metal began to fill the surrounding air.

In this noise, Hyrkan made his move.

In an instant, Hyrkan approached the side of the Lizardman. With a quick motion...

Stab!

He stabbed his sword into the Lizardman's scaly skin.

Having moved stealthily, there wasn't much strength in his attack. Even the sword had only penetrated about an inch of the Lizardman's skin. Taking the Lizardman's size and skin into account, it was hard to expect much damage from such an attack.

However, that was enough.

Hyrkan made a satisfactory smile under his hahoe mask.

Lizardman reacted to Hyrkan's attack. Still in a deadlock, it turned its head to glare at Hyrkan.

That was it.

Although the Lizardman flickered its tongue and glared angrily, that was all it could do. It wasn't in any situation to attack Hyrkan.

In fact, it was a mistake to even turn its head aside.

Hyrkan's sword had been imbued with Demon Curse, and its effect activated immediately.

Lizardman's stats decreased by 10 percent.

With the 20 percent buff of Madness Helm, the Skeleton Warrior could fight evenly with the Lizardman. Now that it had lost 10 percent of its stats, the Lizardman was no longer on even footing.

Kiiik!

The Lizardman's sword began to be pushed back, and it quickly turned its head back towards the Skeleton Warrior.

Stab!

Hyrkan once again stabbed his sword into the Lizardman's side.

Ching!

At that moment, the Skeleton Warrior pushed aside the Lizardman's sword.

An opportunity arose.

Swish!

With that, the Skeleton Warrior freely slashed his sword. The sword cut the Lizardman's shoulder joint, and a deep wound could be seen along with huge amount of blood.

Even at this moment, Hyrkan was doing his work.

Stab stab!

Hyrkan stuck to the Lizardman's side, continuously stabbing the

same spot and digging up the wound.

Chrrrr!

The Lizardman flickered its tongue as it writhed. Hyrkan then distanced himself while the Skeleton Warrior once again threw its body towards the Lizardman. Now out of battle, Hyrkan summoned another Skeleton Warrior. Then, the fight continued.

The Skeleton Warrior under the effect of Madness Helm continued its battle with the Lizardman, while Hyrkan and the newly summoned Skeleton Warrior repeatedly attacked from its flank.

The sound of scales being torn, flesh being cut, and bones being scratched rang out in a mix. The sound of the Lizardman's death began to slowly fill the silent battlefield.



‘1 minute 22 seconds.’

In front of the melting corpse of the Lizardman, Hyrkan checked how long the battle took.

“Wow.”

‘I’m amazing, aren’t I?’

The time it took the level 20 Hyrkan to kill the level 30 Lizardman did not exceed 90 seconds.

The Lizardman wasn't a boss monster. It didn't have high stamina or defense, nor was it a large-type monster. It was a monster a well-coordinated 3-man party could kill in 3 minutes. In other words, Hyrkan's current battle prowess was well over a well-coordinated 3-man party.

Even Hyrkan was surprised. If he had chosen the swordsman class like he did before, he would have needed at least 5 Unique-rank item parts to have the battle power he currently had. Plus, his weapon would have had to be Unique-rank.

Furthermore, Hyrkan was practically under no risk during this fight.

'I didn't think Madness Helm and Bone Armor would go so well together.'

It was thanks to his Skeleton Warrior playing a good tank role.

Madness Helm turned the summons' personalities aggressive. There was no such thing as retreat. Thanks to Hyrkan's training, the Skeleton Warriors showed high close combat evasion, which directly influenced their fighting capabilities.

Finally, the Skeleton Warriors acquired defense power through

Bone Armor. Thanks to that, Skeleton Warriors took significantly less damage, and, consequently, the amount of mana they used decreased as well. Although Bone Armor's mana cost wasn't small, there was still a net mana gain. It would be especially helpful when fighting monsters stronger than Lizardmen.

In any case, aiming for the weak points when a tank was holding up a monster was Hyrkan's specialty.

‘Best formation complete.’

This was the type of battle Hyrkan wanted.

The feeling of everything going as planned made anyone elated.

It was the same for Hyrkan.

‘No need to stop here.’

Occasionally, days like these came. Days when hunting just went so well! It wasn't a common occurrence. Thus, it was important to make the most out of days like this.

‘Alright, let's leave the egg searching for tomorrow. It's not like I can do anything about it now anyway.’

Hyrkan. He started his Lizard Swamp hunt in full scale.

And it didn't take long for his battles to attract the attention of others.



“I told you, we shouldn't have come here.”

“I'm so tired. Unni*, let's just go back.”

[TN: Unni is a younger girl calling an older girl; it's like onee-san.]

“Yeah, let's just go back.”

This 3-man party was rather unique. It was a party made of only female players. They didn't look good. The splashes of mud all over them showed that they had their fair share of troubles in the swamp. Other than that, their looks were quite decent. Of course, although faces of Warlord characters deferred greatly from reality, they were still pretty enough to be hit on when they walked down streets. These three were beauties in their own right.

“Think of what we went through to get here. We can't just go back after five Lizardmen. That's too huge of a loss!”

At the complaints of two, the third member, who seemed like the leader, raised her voice.

“For now, let's move. Get up.”

“I’m tired.”

“We’re in a game. How are you tired? Get up!”

Reluctantly, the two girls stood up, and the party continued walking. In the end, they were able to make a certain discovery.

“Wow! Look at him!”

“Who is he? Wow, he’s so skilled.”

They stood astonished as they found at a player fighting a Lizardman in an unbelievable battle.

Looking at his battle, the party leader’s mouth showed a meaningful smile.

“Let’s stick with him. How about it?”

Like an epidemic, the meaningful smile of the party leader quickly spread to the other two.

Chapter 30. Lizard Swamp (2)

It wasn't uncommon to run into other players when hunting in an area that isn't an instance dungeon.

It was the same in Warlord. Because Warlord's land was huge and because its hunting grounds were usually mountains or other wide spaces, it was slightly harder to run into other players. Even so, one could expect to run into others at least three, four times even in the most unpopular hunting grounds.

When players met each other in the field, most felt joy before wariness. After tense, exhausting situations caused by continuous battles, players felt a sense of kinship when they met. Depending on the situation, some even chose to join parties and work together.

“E-Excuse me!”

In a hunting ground known to be unpopular, Hyrkan now ran into a group of players.

To be exact, he was the one that was approached.

“Hello.”

Hyrkan had recently killed a Lizardman and was currently waiting for it to melt down. Hearing the voice, Hyrkan turned to greet a female player, who he was sure he had never met before.

The female player was quite a beauty. The long, straight black hair beauty was the type to easily make men turn their eyes. Hyrkan glanced at her from top to bottom.

She wore a shiny, silver armor on top of a dress. Along with her straight black hair and well-designed longsword, it was easy to tell she set her items for design rather than defense. Her fashion was designed to attract other players' attentions rather than monsters'.

Hyrkan moved his gaze behind her.

Behind the beautiful swordswoman was a short and cute priestess, and a tall, short-haired magician with foxlike eyes. He could tell that these two also focused their items on fashion. On top of this, it seemed that they went through quite a lot of trouble, as the dirtiness of their clothes caught Hyrkan's attention.

Finishing his observation, Hyrkan came to a conclusion.

‘The hell is this?’

As Hyrkan slowly moved his sight back...

“Have you been hunting here alone?”

The female player carefully threw a question.

In any case, three beauties had approached Hyrkan with interest.

It was a rare occurrence. No, the current situation went past the level of rare as such a thing had never happened to him in real life. Of course, there was a time when a girl was interested in him. Except, it wasn't the good kind of interest.

‘I am suddenly remembering Choi Sulyeon that bitch.’

It was the first time a girl had been interested in him, and that interest had screwed over his life. Because of this, to Hyrkan, the interest of a beauty was... something he'd rather decline.

And so...

‘What does she want?’

Doubt was the first thing on his mind.

First of all, something like the girl blushing and asking for his number was impossible. If she were interested in him as a man, that would be even more dangerous. It wasn't just because of his appearance. Although he wasn't handsome, his appearance had nothing to do with it. After all, he was currently wearing his hahoe mask. The problem was his fashion. If she were interested even after seeing his grotesque, avant-garde fashion, it would be best if he never got involved with her.

As such, Hyrkan didn't answer. He only stared at the woman through his hahoe mask. Their eyes met, and when it did, the woman's mouth bloomed into a flowery smile.

“I watched you kill that Lizardman. It was amazing.”

Hyrkan still did not answer, as the woman continued her praise.

“Even a Ranker would be jealous of your skills. I almost fell for you...”

“What do you want?”

Hyrkan spoke for the first time with a question that couldn't be more indifferent.

“Ah, my name is Ilya.”

At the question, the woman first introduced herself.

“And?”

At her response, Hyrkan cut his answer short. It was a form of intimidation. He would talk less and less if she dragged on. Of course, it wasn't possible to talk any less than he currently did. Thus, if Ilya kept talking, Hyrkan would ignore her.

“Sorry to ask you on our first meeting...”

In the end, she cut straight to her point.

“But please help us complete our quest.”

“Please!”

The moment Ilya finished her sentence, the short priestess behind her opened her mouth as if to put in a chorus. Also, they showed puppy eyes and sorrowful expression that would easily make men do their bidding.

As a man, Hyrkan's heart also throbbed. However, it wasn't the throb of interest against the opposite sex.

‘Are these bitches for real? They're just asking me if they can leech off me.’

It was something one would run into at least one time in online games. The kind that asked for free rides just because they were pretty girls. To Hyrkan, the whole thing was simply absurd. If one wanted to play with girls in the VR world, it was much better to play dating sims or other adult content.

‘Is this what the saying, ‘all good things come to an end,’ means? What is this bullshit trying to get on my nerves?’

In any case, Hyrkan didn't have an inkling of mind to listen to their request. On top of it being an absurd request, he wasn't in a good mood.

Starting from when he ran into that Ranker-class player at Bangtz Castle to being unable to upload his current hunting videos to YouTube, he was annoyed by many things. When he finally got around to hunting some monsters on a good day, the current situation threw a bucket of cold water on him.

Thus, Hyrkan replied from the bottom of his heart.

“Fuck off.”

Hyrkan had no interest in romance, and he was certainly not a gentleman.

At Hyrkan’s response, Ilya joined her hands as if to pray and lightly bowed.

“Please, just help us out for this quest. We will reward you for sure.”

Hyrkan simply turned away. He could tell she was the kind in which words didn’t work. In a case like this, it was best just to ignore. He had never heard of someone like this changing.

“Wait!”

Ilya grabbed onto Hyrkan’s shoulder. At that moment, Hyrkan stopped his feet and turned around. Watching Hyrkan with a face full of misery...

“Just 10... I beg you. We’ll compensate you for sure. Please help us.”

Ilya once again beseeched him.

If it was possible to cry in-game, bead-like tear drops must have fallen on her cheeks.

Staring at her silently for just a moment, Hyrkan opened his tightly shut mouth.

“... I just have to help you kill ten?”

Hearing this, Ilya finally made a full smile.

“Yes!”

“Then I’ll kill exactly ten.”



Hyrkan vowed to himself.

That in this lifetime, he would never trust anyone ever again, and that he would never be with anyone ever again.

This vow wasn't just a bluff to ease his bitter heart. With the knowledge he had, if he sold his pride just a little and decided to enjoy his new life, wealth and honor would have been his. Throwing such a life away, he had made the vow, prepared to walk a path of hardship.

‘These bitches...’

Would he throw away such a vow for a few beauties? It wasn't impossible, but at the very least, now wasn't the time.

Then why did Hyrkan accept their request?

‘They're swans on the outside, but hyenas on the inside.’

He changed his mind the moment his shoulder was grabbed. When Ilya grabbed his shoulder, Hyrkan felt he couldn't shake off her hand.

It meant her strength was higher than Hyrkan's.

Of course, it was expected for Hyrkan's strength to be lower than a swordsman of his level. Given, the swordsman of the same level wasn't a tank-type, but a type that went all into strength.

In other words, Ilya wasn't a tank. There was no way Hyrkan didn't catch what this implied.

In a 3-man party, the role of a tank was vital. But a party came to a high-difficulty hunting ground like the Lizard Swamp without a tank?

Their biggest mistake was asking for help on a quest important enough to give compensation. If the quest were that important, they would simply ask for help online, and skilled players would come to their aid. That, of course, was given they had the money... no, considering they appealed their beauty, money might have no meaning. There were plenty of people that would jump to help a group of beauties.

Even so, they asked Hyrkan for help? It was a clear lie that they needed his help to complete a quest.

‘Are they aiming for my left?’

They were clearly aiming for Hyrkan. Otherwise, there was no reason to act in such a way.

That said, they wouldn’t actively try to PK him. If that was their plan, there was no need to approach him the way they did. They would have simply attacked him when he was off guard.

Considering the way they approached him, it was likely that they would intentionally create a dangerous situation and make monsters kill him.

‘These bitches are even worse than those shitheads from

before...’

It was a common trick. One just had to use the fact that players felt happy to meet others in the field. If a problem occurred during battle, it would be an accident, not a PK. It was a truly dirty method. After all, one would have to go through an immense amount of effort to fuck over a single person.

In any case, Hyrkan wasn’t the type to let off a bunch of schemers.

He wasn’t in the mood.

‘If you get caught lying, your hand’s got to go.’

He planned to rob them clean.

“Let’s go over the situation. Do you have any experience fighting a Lizardman?”

“We’ve killed some before.”

“How many?”

“Um... two. After that, we fell into the swamp. We ended up this way while running away.”

“You have a priestess and a magician. What was the problem?”

“The thing is... I can’t act as a tank, so there was never a good window to use magic and the priestess’s magic power just kept going down. In the end, we couldn’t do anything.”

‘Yeah, that’s because you set your items to hunt people, not monsters. You’re here because it’s the easiest place for this scenario of yours, and once you came here, there weren’t any idiots to take your bait. That’s probably when I caught your attention. There’s not a single truth coming out of your mouth.’

Hyrkan barely managed to keep his raging heart in check.

“Then do you know how to lure Lizardmen?”

“Yes! We can at least do that.”

“Alright then, lure them to designated points one by one, and I’ll get them. Don’t needlessly interfere when I fight. The magician should only provide back up when I call for it. By the way, if the priestess buffs my skeletons, this party’s finished. Got it?”

Ilya nodded her head as she said added some words.

“Thank you for accepting our selfish request... thank you so much.”

“Thank you, Oppa*!”

[T/N: younger girl to an older male, like onii-san. It's also considered a sign of affection. I'm sure you guys know it from Gangnam Style.]

One of the other two quickly voiced her thanks, attempting to win Hyrkan over by calling him 'oppa.' The remaining one also slightly lowered her head. Being thanked by three beauties, any guy would grin.

Hyrkan grinned as well.

Except, he did it on purpose.

‘I see these bitches grew accustomed to this. Well, I guess it can be addicting. They'll end up having to pay for it in the end, though.’

As Hyrkan had ideas about their real intention, he could only feel a chill at their acting skills. Once one got the taste of something like this, it was hard to stop. It was like gambling. Even though they knew it was bad, it was fun and stimulating. Because they were in a VR game, they wouldn't be punished under the law either.

‘With their looks, don't they have anything better to do? Why do something like this in Warlord...’

At that point, Hyrkan stopped his thinking.

‘Come to think of it; there’s only a handful of sane beauties in Warlord.’

Thinking back, of the beauties he had met in Warlord, only a handful was normal. Choi Sulyeon who Hyrkan considered to be the greatest beauty he ever met was even more so...

‘Fuck.’

Having remembered Choi Sulyeon, Hyrkan’s mood took a dive. He remembered an unpleasant face. Because of just how beautiful she was, he couldn’t easily erase her from his mind either. She was truly what he would call an enemy of a lifetime.

“Then we’ll lure one over here. Hold on just one moment.”

Hyrkan didn’t bother to listen to what Ilya was saying. He simply waved his hand back and forth.

Like so, the girls headed to the swamp area.

Thus started their secret plan.



“Unni, are you just going to leech or rob him clean?”

At her little sister*'s question, Ilya immediately answered.

[T/N: not an actual little sister.]

“Of course, we’re robbing him clean.”

“I don’t think he has much. Wouldn’t it be better just to let him kill 10 lizards? If we coax him a little more, we could probably hunt all day for free.”

At this moment, the magician added her thoughts.

“Necromancer isn’t a class you can do without money. You saw his fight just now, right? For his Skeleton Warriors to be so strong, he must have at least three or four Unique items.”

At this, Ilya added her own explanation.

“You saw his necklace right? Have you seen one with a jewel that big?”

The short priestess began to ponder. Although she had seen a countless number of necklaces with jewels, she rarely saw them in Warlord.

“Now that I think of it, I haven’t seen one with a jewel like that.”

“Just look at his fashion. His items must be on a different level. Our profit from robbing him won’t be small.”

“Any potential backlash? If he’s so rich, there must be someone behind him.”

“If that were the case, he wouldn’t be here alone. Plus, it’s not like we’re openly PKing him.”

Ilya smiled deeply.

“It’s just going to be a little accident. The kind that comes from accidentally luring too many monsters.”

Watching her smile, the other two smiled as well.

“I always think this, but Unni must be Warlord’s prettiest bitch.”

Ilya laughed.

“And you?”

“I’m third.”

“You’re not bad yourself, you know?”

At that moment, the three burst out into laughter. The laughter

was short. A Lizardman had found them first and was slowly walking towards them.

Chapter 31. Lizard Swamp (3)

Luring was a form of art.

Bringing a target to a wanted location was harder than one might think. In addition, Warlord monsters had their own characteristics. Of these, there were some that sent signals to their comrades or went back if they strayed too far from their pack.

Even with detailed knowledge on monster behavior, accidents happened. This fact was unchanged for even the Top 30 Guilds. In live broadcasts, it was common to see fights break out due to failed luring. That's what made it so much fun. Accidents that went against prearranged plans kept viewers tense and on the edge of their seats.

Not to mention, it was much more difficult to lure monsters in the Lizard Swamp. Lizardmen were easy to aggro. In other words, if one ran into another Lizardman on their way to a designated hunting point, one would end up attracting two Lizardman. In that case, the player would no longer be considered luring. He was simply being chased.

The same applied to the current situation.

Nine.

Partied with three beauties, Hyrkan caught nine Lizardmen. So far, everything went without a hitch. Their party had lacked a tank, but Hyrkan and his Skeleton Warrior proved to be excellent

supports.

In reality, Hyrkan was doing all the hunting. The other three were only sucking up experience like a mosquito.

But suddenly!

“Help!”

Ilya appeared with two Lizardman on her tail. Running towards Hyrkan, she asked him for help. Hyrkan snapped his finger twice, and the Skeleton Warriors that were on standby turned their heads towards the Lizardmen. The flames in their eyes blazed as they charged towards the two Lizardmen.

Ilya ran past the Skeleton Warriors to safety.

Behind her...

Clang, clang!

The sound of battle rang out. Hyrkan asked through the clashing sound of metals.

“What happened?”

“I, I ran into a problem.”

Ilya continued with a confused and apologetic expression.

“I ran into a group of Lizardmen. In the end, the three of us had to split up...”

Hyrkan tried to ask her for a more detailed explanation.

However...

“Sorry, I’m so sorry.”

Ilya kept apologizing before Hyrkan said anything, not giving him a chance to speak. She didn’t just ask for forgiveness. She did so with a teary face. Seeing her act that way, Hyrkan chose to not say anything.

“Let’s deal with this situation first. I can’t handle both of them alone. I need your support.”

“Of course!”

Ilya finally smiled. Her smile together with her teary face made her look pitiful yet beautiful. It was like a flower carefully blooming in torrential rain.

Hyrkan couldn’t say anything more to her face. Not just Hyrkan, but any male would find themselves hard pressed to do so. Hyrkan

silently passed her with his sword in hand. He prepared to fight the Lizardmen. Watching Hyrkan's back, Ilya's smile became twisted.

‘Heh, he’s totally into me.’

It was a smile of satisfaction.

‘I mean, it’s only expected with beauties of our level’s affectionate acting.’

The type of smile that fishermen with a big fish on their hook would make.

She had her worries. Hyrkan's skills weren't normal. Although they didn't take him to be anything amazing, his three Skeleton Warriors were anything but normal. She felt it would be hard to honey-trap Hyrkan with monsters and their beauty.

But her worries did not last long.

For Ilya, it was much more fun to trick players than to hunt monsters. Using her looks and acting skills, she destroyed the inner walls that male players put up and lured monsters to kill them. To her, it was fun to prey on males without having to worry about any potential backlash. It was the type of fun only girls could enjoy, and at the same time, it was something that wasn't possible in the real world.

At first, it started out as a joke, a bet of some sort. ‘Who can win over that male player first?’ That type of bet. In a blink of an eye, the bet had continued to where she currently was. It had even become the sole reason she played Warlord.

In front of Hyrkan who had put up a thick wall, the fun was multiplied. His cold and blunt response set fire to her sense of challenge. Ilya looked forward to watching him fall more so than the items he would drop.

It wouldn’t be long. Soon, Hyrkan would fall.

‘Two more will be here soon.’

The remaining two were each luring one Lizardman. No matter how impressive Hyrkan may be, it was impossible for him to handle four Lizardmen by himself. If he could, there was no reason for him to be here.

Even more, if a strong magic hit Hyrkan or one of his Skeleton Warriors on ‘accident’?

Watching the Hyrkan’s back, Ilya licked her lips, like a true snake.

‘Ah!’

Imagining the scene, she would soon see; Ilya felt goose bumps on her skin. Although it wasn’t a feeling one could perceive in

Warlord, she was sure she could feel it. The arms of her body in the real world would surely be covered in them.

‘I love this feeling so much.’

This feeling. It was this feeling that she paid such a large sum to play Warlord. Such a feeling of euphoria wasn't one she could feel in the real world. Not to mention, it was an act that wouldn't pose any legal troubles, a perfectly lawful crime!

Of course, it wasn't over yet. A fisherman's work did not end until he cut the stomach of his game.

Ilya stared at Hyrkan and his summoned Skeleton Warriors as they vigorously fought against the Lizardmen.

Crack!

Suddenly, the sound of a hard object breaking struck down like lightning.

‘Eh?’

The scene of Skeleton Warriors helpless against Lizardmen entered her eyes.

‘What's going on?’

The Skeleton Warriors she had seen so far did not lose out to

Lizardmen in a one on one fight. She wondered just how much money one had to spend to make such strong Skeleton Warriors. If she had the money, she even wanted to try out the necromancer class.

But suddenly, those Skeleton Warriors were losing.

They weren't just losing. They were losing in a completely one-sided manner.

Crack! Crack!

The Lizardmen's swords were easily breaking the Skeleton Warriors' bone shields.

Crack!

Under the continuous barrage of attacks, the Skeleton Warriors broke to an irreparable state. In addition, the Skeleton Warriors weren't able to counterattack in the slightest. They were no different than sandbags.

Ilya became flustered.

This wasn't it.

Although the Lizardmen were supposed to kill Hyrkan, such a scene wasn't part of her scenario.

Suddenly...

“I’m out of magic power!”

Hyrkan shouted at Ilya. As if that wasn’t enough, Hyrkan approached Ilya and spoke again.

“I have no magic power left. Please buy some time for me to recover it.”

“What do you...”

“You just have to buy time. We’re in an urgent situation, so please take on the role of the tank for a while.”

Ilya did not have any way to refuse Hyrkan’s demand. Everyone knew that a magician without magic power was useless in Warlord.

In the end, Ilya reluctantly and carefully moved towards the Lizardmen.

Watching Ilya approach the Lizardmen, Hyrkan silently smirked.

‘Who do you think you’re trying to backstab?’

Everything so far was within Hyrkan's expectations. Although it was possible that they would leave after the ten Lizardmen, Hyrkan was confident enough to bet his life that they would try to backstab him.

That's what Warlord was. There was no such thing as turning over a new leaf. As the saying went, once a thief, always a thief. Those who enjoyed PKs did PKs their whole life and those who enjoyed conning others conned others their whole life. Nothing changed in Warlord. There was no reason to.

When Hyrkan saw Ilya bring over two Lizardmen, he knew their plan began. There was no doubt that the other two were bringing more Lizardmen.

He didn't have to see it to know. They planned to throw a bomb called Lizardmen, and when Hyrkan was in a close fight, they planned to throw a magic attack on Hyrkan on 'accident'. They might even 'mistakenly' cast Healing on his skeletons. No matter the case, they would burst out into laughter once Hyrkan died. The memory of today would serve as another treasure for them.

There was no way Hyrkan would allow such a thing.

So he...

'They're coming.'

Threw the bomb back at them.

It was simple. He just didn't have to take the bomb in the first place.

Hyrkan snapped his fingers.

Snap, snap!

One, two.

Snap!

Then three!

The snapped his fingers thrice.

Then, in the middle of battle, his Skeleton Warriors began to dance.

The zombie dance of Michael Jackson's Thriller embroidered the battlefield.



♪' Cause this is thriller □, thriller night ♪

Michael Jackson's Thriller. The beat of that masterpiece thumped Hyrkan's chest and eardrums. Only Hyrkan could hear the song.

As such, Ilya only saw the Skeleton Warriors that had been fighting by her side suddenly straighten their two arms and move side to side.

Not to mention, she had never seen Michael Jackson's Thriller before.

‘What?’

In such a ridiculous situation, she panicked. She couldn't discern what was happening.

Meanwhile, her two friends arrived.

“Help!”

As previously promised, the two of them each brought a Lizardman as they arrived pleading for help. When they saw the scene in front of them, they also fell into a panic.

Meanwhile, the Lizardmen easily got rid of the dancing Skeleton Warriors. Their heads flew with a swing of a sword, and their bodies ended up in tatters after the Lizardmen struck them down with their swords. In the end, the Skeleton Warriors fell.

The Lizardmen flickered their tongues. They weren't finished. They wanted more sacrifice. Immediately, they changed their target to Ilya, who was already fighting off one Lizardman.

Clang!

Ilya blindly swung her sword only to fend off the Lizardman's sword.

Watching this scene, Ilya's two friends could only stand flustered.

‘What’s going on?’

‘Why is unni fighting?’

Their leader was floundering in danger.

On the other hand, Hyrkan who was supposed to be the one in danger was lightly dancing in the back.

With this, it wasn't hard to determine what happened.

‘... shit.’

‘He found out?’

Watching the scene in front of him, Hyrkan smiled brightly.

‘God, I love necromancer.’

He had changed his Skeleton Warriors to defense mode, ordering them to block with their shields instead of evading. This was what led them to become the Lizardmen’s sandbags.

It was all a ploy.

Then, in the most critical moment, he made them dance.

‘I swear, I need to leave this in video.’

Originally, he didn’t plan on making them dance. He planned just to turn them back into their fragment forms.

However, his mood didn’t let him.

Had the girls picked a fight with him straight up or stole his monster, he would have acted appropriately. Instead, they tried to backstab him. They tried to act like his ally to screw him over.

They had evoked the king’s wrath.

Here, Hyrkan stopped acting. At quite a distance away, he spoke

to the beauties in the battlefield.

“There is a lot of swamp areas around here, so I recommend you fight rather than run.”

The girls didn't answer. Dumbfounded at the fact their plan had gone awry, they stood speechless.

Clang!

Ilya couldn't afford to listen to Hyrkan. Her attention was solely devoted to fighting the Lizardmen. She was almost at her limit as her feet sunk into the trap-like swamp. It wasn't easy to move in swamps. It was even harder to run. It would be possible if she were separated by some distance, but running away in the middle of a battle was impossible. It was equivalent to giving the opponent her back.

Moreover, she was barely dealing with one Lizardman, but now there were two. She felt herself about to go crazy.

It was the same for the remaining magician and priestess. Now that they couldn't just throw off the Lizardmen behind them, things became much complicated. Could they win against them 1 vs. 1? It might be possible for the magician, but it was impossible for the priestess. She needed help. However, there was only one that could help them...

And that was Hyrkan.

Of course, Hyrkan didn't have an inkling of mind to help them.

Instead, he offered them some advice.

“There's a movie called Hoodwinker that came out 30 years ago. It tells you what happens to liars so check it out.”

It was a truly priceless advice.

“W-Wait!”

Though someone had called him, Hyrkan only waved his hand as he left the scene.

Watching him go, all three of the shouted at the same time.

“Damn!”

That was their last word.

Chapter 32. The Corrupted Stone (1)

In Lizard Swamp, two players were facing each other. However, the two were in completely different states.

One stood straight and tall, while the other was kneeling on the ground. The latter's arms were held by Skeleton Warriors, as his eyes were full of brutal injuries.

“You, I swear I’ll get my revenge on you...”

The kneeled player grit his teeth as he spoke to the standing man with hatred. The standing man, of course, was Hyrkan. Wearing an almost spotless armor, Hyrkan smirked at the kneeling player's child-like curse.

“Yeah, sure. If you're coming, bring some more expensive items. I'll be waiting. See you in 48 hours. Sleep tight. Good night~”

With that, Hyrkan stared at the three Skeleton Warriors surrounding the kneeling player.

Snap, snap!

Hyrkan snapped his fingers twice, making two Skeleton Warriors pulled on the player's arms. The remaining Skeleton Warrior raised his sword and stabbed the gap between the player's helmet and breastplate.

Stab, stab!

As if once wasn't enough, the Skeleton Warrior stabbed consecutively. Hyrkan only watched on emotionlessly. Rather than emotionless, it was more correct to say Hyrkan erased the battle just now from his memory. Only a number was recorded.

‘It's the 15th one now.’

Two weeks had passed since Hyrkan came to the Lizard Swamp. After the first day's disturbance, Hyrkan put his focus on leveling up. The result was great, as he achieved 7 levels during that time. Considering that it takes an average player 2 weeks to go from level 20 to level 30, Hyrkan's level up speed was comparable... no, much faster than the Rankers.

However, hunting wasn't the only thing he did.

‘It's almost one per day.’

He was attacked. Not once, but nine times, for a total of fifteen players.

‘Come on, this isn't even the real world. All this, just to look good to girls in a VR game? If they like girls so much, why don't they go play dating sims or a blind date game?’

“Haa... I guess it really is hard to find normal people in Warlord.”

The attackers' motive was revenge.

The three beauties that approached to play Hyrkan, but got played by Hyrkan. Instead of reflecting on their mistake, they coaxed other men to get revenge on Hyrkan.

‘What a bunch of snakes. At least their fishing skills are top notch.’

Of course, Hyrkan didn't have a shred of regret about screwing over those girls. He had not physically harmed them in any way. It's just that there was a little accident during their hunting, which was caused by the three girls, not Hyrkan. In fact, Hyrkan was more help to them than harm. After all, he killed nine Lizardmen for them. If anything, he should be rewarded.

Unfortunately, Warlord wasn't a place where such logic applied. If three beauties accused a strange man wearing a hahoe mask and leather clothing of assaulting them, there were bound to be people who believed them.

Some of them would have their normally nonexistent sense of justice provoked and come out to judge said sexual deviant.

‘Their acting skills are just too good. I wouldn't be surprised if they debuted as actresses soon.’

In reality, Hyrkan could easily justify himself, but Hyrkan didn't

do so.

‘Well, I’m thankful to be honest.’

Looking at the wrist of the player in the game over state, Hyrkan grinned.

This was why.

Hyrkan didn’t need to justify himself in any way.

‘This one was trash too, but looking at his items, he must be around mid to late 30s. That means his items should be at least level 30. Now, if I can get a level 30 rare item... I can have some meat for dinner tonight.’

Why would he say no to human-form monsters delivering themselves to his doorsteps? Not to mention, they drop already crafted items.

More importantly, although Hyrkan was unbelievably strong against monsters, he was even more monstrous versus players. Furthermore, it was hard to find good players from the self-righteous fools trying to look good to a bunch of girls.

Of course, Hyrkan didn’t forget to remind himself.

‘If they’re going so far to get back at me, for two weeks no less,

then they'll have to pay the price. If I catch them again, I'm going to play soccer with their cut-off heads.'

Hyrkan told himself to get back at the girls when he got the chance. Otherwise, they would never stop.

In any case, thanks to these reasons, the Lizard Swamp, which was no different than hell to other players, was nothing less than heaven for Hyrkan.

He leveled up fast, and people even came to donate him items. There was truly no better hunting ground.

"Tsk."

Could that be why?

Hyrkan felt a sense of shame again. He would have to leave the Lizard Swamp soon. After all, he couldn't stay here forever.

"What a shame."

After picking up the watch, Hyrkan looked around. He had long grown accustomed to the area, showing just how long he had stayed. Soon, he would have to leave.

'3 levels left to go... I'm hoping I can get at least 5 more watches until then.'

Level 30.

That was Hyrkan's current goal. Once he achieved level 30, he planned to search the Lizard Swamp thoroughly to clear his Nested Egg quest. And if he couldn't find it?

Then he would have no choice but to move on to the next place. He couldn't stay in one place forever. Not unless he knew for certain that this was the quest area. However, even if Lizard Swamp wasn't the quest area, he didn't need to feel bad.

'If this isn't the place for the Nested Egg quest... I'm going to put out all the videos I collected from here.'

If this wasn't the testing ground Ahimbree mentioned, it wouldn't be one of the places suspected by the ones who approached Hyrkan. In that case, it would be fine to make his videos from here public.

In any case, Hyrkan would benefit.

Thinking about this, the corner of Hyrkan's mouth once again curled up into a smile. With that, Hyrkan shook his pocket full of watches.

'It's been a while. Why don't I go cash in?'



Ttzzzz!

As a thick piece of meat fell onto a heated pan, an enticing burning smell filled the air. The taste of a savory steak could be easily imagined through the smell.

‘God, it’s been so long.’

In front of such a smell, An Jaehyun couldn’t help but smile.

‘Ku! What a shame I can’t drink beer with this.’

2,530,000 won.

That was the amount that entered his bank account today.

He had transferred the money he made so far into his bank account. YouTube donations and the amount from selling Lizardmen’s crafting materials. Of course, these two didn’t account for much of his earning. The secret lied in the watches he exchanged.

‘I can’t believe I got a level 35 Rare weapon.’

A level 35 Rare weapon, a sword no less. Just this was 800,000

won.

‘I also can’t believe that was all he could do with a weapon like that... talk about casting pearls before swine.’

It was thanks to this weapon that Hyrkan’s usual dinner menu of glucose candy and cheap coffee turned into the current tenderloin steak. With his long awaited protein ahead of him, An Jaehyun was feeling happier than ever.

‘No, I’m grateful. Bless them, really. It’s because they spent their money in this game that I’m able to eat like this. If I see them again, I should greet them. Maybe I’ll even give them a hug.’

The smile on Hyrkan’s face didn’t seem to want to disappear. That was how happy An Jaehyun was. He felt like he was soaring in the skies. After plating his steak, he put the macaroni salad and potato salad he bought from the supermarket next to him.

Gulp!

He would feel even better once he put the meat in his mouth, as he would achieve absolute bliss.

But Hyrkan’s happy feeling...

“Mm? An email?”

Was destroyed when he saw a certain email.



– I am Stormhunter Guild’s head scout. Hahoe Mask Hyrkan, I saw your YouTube videos. I was mesmerized by your skill and talent. Thus, we, the Stormhunter Guild, would like to invite you for a formal talk. Between 10 A.M. and 6 P.M. Korea time, setting aside lunch time of 1 P.M. to 2 P.M., tell us when you are free. We will be awaiting your response.

It went without saying that those who could make a name for themselves by uploading personal videos to YouTube received attention from numerous groups – Video content creation businesses, management companies, and Warlord guilds, etc. Scouting offers from groups like these were like a medal of honor for Warlord YouTubers.

Just one of such offer would make one happy, and even more so as they accumulated.

However, when An Jaehyun saw this medal of honor, joy was furthest from what he was feeling.

‘Stormhunter... that damn name.’

Scouting offers weren’t outside of his expectations. He had already been receiving offers from management companies and guilds. If one wasn’t blind, it was easy to tell An Jaehyun’s battles

were incomparable to other players'. Although most of his offers came from no-name guilds, he had received some from fairly well-organized, mid-size guilds. He even got offers on how to raise an all-strength necromancer.

In that sense, this was truly a big deal. Although An Jaehyun's YouTube page was getting popular, it wasn't to the point one of Top 30 Guilds would make a scouting offer. The Top 30 Guilds were generally busy pulling the weeds out from those that applied. They didn't bother to look for players on their own accord. Even if they did, they had their pride. Because of this pride, they didn't easily do such a thing.

However, he had gotten an offer from a Top 30 Guilds for the first time. Most Warlord YouTubers would have contacted them without turning back. They would be drunk in happiness.

However, An Jaehyun still remembered clear as day.

'At the very least, I'll never hold hands with that bitch.'

Why was he here?

It was because of the Stormhunter Guild and Choi Sulyeon. Just remembering her face made him grit his teeth. The sense of hatred, pain, and despair he felt because of her and others, he could still feel it.

It went without saying that An Jaehyun didn't have the faintest

idea of accepting this offer.

‘Even if there’s a knife to my throat... well no, I’ve already experienced that many times.’

As such, this offer only put his mood in a dumpster, nothing more and nothing less.

‘That bitch. At least she’s got good standards.’

An Jaehyun immediately deleted the email. Then, he went back to eating. However, the taste of the meat was no longer on his mind. An Jaehyun chewed on the meat as if he was chewing on rubber.

His eyes shined with menace.

The Stormhunter Guild’s scouting offer evoked the wrath of a king. An Jaehyun was remembering his original intention.

‘Right, this isn’t the time to sit and chew on some meat. An Jaehyun, don’t think you’re free to eat meat just because you’ve got some money now.’

An Jaehyun struck down on the steak with his fork. Is this the time to leisurely eat meat?

‘If I’m satisfied with where I am, that’s all I will ever be. An

Jaehyun, get your shit together.'

No.

An Jaehyun. His goal was to take everything on alone. To become the best in Warlord.

To become the best, he had to give up everything. The life of wealth and honor could wait until he achieved his goal. Before then... he had to be a starving predator.

An Jaehyun got up from his seat. He put his steak and salad into the trashcan. Then, he boiled water and threw in a handful of glucose candy into a cup.

Beeeeep!

Only the sound of a kettle filled the surrounding air of loneliness.

Chapter 33. The Corrupted Stone (2)

It was on the 20th day of entering Lizard Swamp that Hyrkan reached his level 30 goal.

[You have leveled up.]

At the same time his level went up...

[You have obtained the title, 'Lizard Hunter'.]

He obtained a new title. It was because he had killed hundreds of Lizardmen by the time he hit level 30.

Next.

[Skeleton Fragment skill rank has increased to D.]

[Demon Curse skill rank has increased to E.]

[Madness Helm skill rank has increased to E.]

Three skills ranked up simultaneously. The Lizard Hunter title and achieving level 30 had boosted his skill proficiencies significantly.

To Hyrkan, these alerts were the harmonic choir of heavenly voices. He felt like he was ascending every time he heard one alert.

Hyrkan shook as he clenched his fists tightly.

‘Yeah, that’s right! This is what Hero Slaughterer Hyrkan is all about!’

Truth be told, even Hyrkan was surprised at his current achievements.

‘I can’t believe I beat my past record by 4 days.’

In the past, it took 24 days for him to get from level 20 to level 30. During those 24 days, he played Warlord like a corpse, not to mention he wasn’t alone. Back then, he was with Kim Dongsoo, the man he believed to be friends with forever.

Although they weren’t at their prime, their achievement of level 30 allowed them to believe that they could really turn their lives around through Warlord. Any doubts they had before had turned into confidence.

Rightly so. It took 30 days for slightly above average players, but they managed to do it in 24 days. Those 6 days accounted for a 20 percent decrease. The difference was between that of someone who ran 100 meters in 10 seconds and 8 seconds.

But Hyrkan managed to shorten that time by another 4 days.

20 days!

‘Although it isn’t a new record, it’s at least faster than the current Rankers in the 100s.’

It called for a celebration. It signified that Hyrkan’s choice wasn’t wrong, and that he could run much faster than the Rankers who had started playing 10 months ago.

Hyrkan gained confidence.

‘That’s right, I’m good.’

At the same time, he grumbled.

‘I deserve to eat some meat now, don’t I?’

It was over throwing away the expensive tenderloin steak a few days ago. In truth, he massively regretted his actions as he ate protein powder. Of course, as always, it was a little too late for regret.

‘Ehew, I’m such an idiot.’

Hyrkan erased the painful memory from his mind.

‘Mm?’

At that time, Hyrkan caught sight of something appearing then disappearing in the distance. With no hesitation, Hyrkan changed his Skeleton Warriors back to their fragment form and collected them. Then, he disappeared between the trees.

“Find him!”

It was then, the people who had been hiding came out and ran towards where Hyrkan was.

“We have to find him, quick!”

A player urgently shouted. Squatted behind a tree, Hyrkan watched the player that shouted. He was someone Hyrkan was acquainted with.

‘There’s that retard again.’

It was a player that came to avenge the three beauties, and was absolutely thrashed by Hyrkan. This time, he came with two companions.

‘My level 30 gifts grew legs!’

It was a visit Hyrkan couldn’t decline. As such, Hyrkan slowly revealed himself.

“Here! Thanks for coming all the way out here!”

After coming out of hiding, Hyrkan waved his hand to make himself known.

He was fully confident.

That he could take care of three by himself. No, Hyrkan wasn't alone. Now, he had four trustworthy skeleton servants. He didn't have a reason to be afraid.

'If I get something good again, I'll get steak again. This time, I won't throw it away. No matter what happens... agh, I can't believe I did something so stupid.'



One man was kneeling in a swamp. His eyes were a mess as if he had been through a torture. Standing about three feet away was Hyrkan.

"Let me ask you something. Did those bitches tell you they'd give you a kiss in real life if you caught me? What, did they write you a contract for a deep kiss? Otherwise, why are you doing all this just to get me?"

At Hyrkan's inquiry, the blind man did not respond.

"Don't tell me you actually put your life on the line for a kiss.

Really? I mean, a life in Warlord is cheaper than one in real life, but it's still not worth a kiss. Come on, don't you have anything better to do?"

"... You son of a bitch, you think you'll be fine after this?"

At Hyrkan's teasing, the man became enraged as he threatened Hyrkan. Of course, his threat didn't mean a thing to Hyrkan. By his books, it didn't even count as one.

Hyrkan grinned. As he did, he tapped his left wrist with his right index finger. Then, a Skeleton Warrior sliced down at the man's left wrist. His hand wasn't chopped off with just one swing. After all, he was wearing thick, steel gloves.

Bang, bang!

As if it was hammering, the Skeleton Warrior continuously struck down on his glove. After several clashes, giving off sparks, his steel glove became a mess and his hand chopped off.

Hyrkan grabbed the chopped off hand by its wrist, took out the watch, then stored it in his pocket.

"I'll let you live."

With that, without delivering the final blow, Hyrkan left.

‘It’s about time to leave here.’

He had gained quite a lot in the Lizard Swamp. Thus, it was time to finish up.

More importantly, there were just too many who Hyrkan had done in. In the first place, they grouped up against one man just to look good to a bunch of girls. They were the type to try every means possible to have their way.

They would go after him with vengeance. They might even hire a skilled Ranker. In Warlord, one could do almost everything with money. Because of this, Hyrkan had to finish up and leave the Lizard Swamp. Moreover, Lizard Swamp was no longer a favorable hunting ground for Hyrkan. Although it was right for his level, Hyrkan could hunt at a higher level hunting ground with his abilities.

There was only one thing left to do.

‘If I can’t find that egg in 3 days, I’m going to give up.’

The Nested Egg quest.

Hyrkan gave 3 days until its deadline. He would look for it with all his might for these three days, and if he couldn’t find it, he would give up and move on to the next area. If he couldn’t find it there either, then the right choice would be to come back to Lizard Swamp.

Plus, Hyrkan had diligently collected any information on the Nested Egg, and did his fair share of analysis.

‘It’s called Nested Egg, but I’m sure it’s not some normal egg.’

Hyrkan was positive that what he was looking for wasn’t really a nest or an egg.

This quest was part of the Corrupted Count quest. In that case, it was likely that the Power of Corruption would be related somehow.

‘Could the egg have been exposed to Corruption? Then what does Nest mean?’

A monster’s egg exposed to the Power of Corruption.

For the record, it was exceedingly difficult to find a Lizardman’s egg. As it was considered a crafting item rather than a monster, it was a treasure hunt to find one. This was why Hyrkan have yet to find any. At the same time, what Hyrkan needed to find was not likely to be a normal egg from a Lizardman’s nest.

As said before, it must be related to the Power of Corruption in some way. Ahimbree would not have given him a simple quest like brining back an egg from a nest. Hyrkan needed a special egg from a special nest.

‘If only I could find a Corrupted monster...’

What would be most helpful in situations like this was finding a monster with the ‘Corrupted’ title.

With that, he would be able to ensure that something was related to the Corrupted Count.

However, no matter how much Hyrkan looked for information on Bangtz Castle’s Lizard Swamp, he could not find anything about a mutant monster. In fact, there were more stories about Hyrkan; that a very strange necromancer was going berserk in the Lizard Swamp.

Moreover, even if someone found a mutant in the Lizard Swamp, it was unlikely for that information to be shared. After all, such rare monsters would drop rare crafting items. The founder would obviously try to kill it. Otherwise, he would sell information about it for a sizable sum.

Relying on information from fan sites to solve this problem was meaningless. It was no different than buying a lottery ticket and expecting to win.

In the end, there was only one answer.

‘Time to run.’



‘Shit.’

Hyrkan ran with all his might. Behind him, seven players chased after him.

“Get him!”

“Don’t let him get away again!”

Hearing the hostile voices behind him, Hyrkan clenched his teeth.

‘These god damn idiots. Are they not embarrassed, doing all this for a bunch of girls? Fuck!’

The ones taken out by Hyrkan. Realizing that they were powerless to deal with him alone, they banded together. Of course, it was unlikely that they found each other on their own. Ilya and the other two bitches likely had their hands in the matter.

In any case, a total of ten players grouped together to catch Hyrkan.

It was a rather large number for a bunch of idiots who got tricked by a bunch of girls. The group immediately formed a plan to catch Hyrkan, and the current situation was a result of that plan.

Hyrkan was running.

No matter how strong he was, it was impossible for him to handle 10 players who were equal or higher level than him. At the same time, Hyrkan didn't have the slightest idea of wanting to die in a valiant battle.

The only answer was to run!

Thankfully, there were three factors that helped Hyrkan's escape. First was that Hyrkan was an all-strength necromancer. Second was that he knew the ins and outs of the Lizard Swamp. The last was that...

“You bastard!”

In the most critical situation...

‘Summon Skeleton Warrior!’

He could call upon a scapegoat to take the blow for him.

The summoned Skeleton Warrior quickly blocked the path Hyrkan crossed. As soon as the Skeleton Warrior appeared, the swordsmen that were running after him swung their swords at it.

Whish!

Although it dodged the first swordsman's sword,

Crack!

The second swordsman's sword broke its shoulder bones.

Thud!

It then blocked the third swordsman's swing with its shield.

Crack!

But the follow-up attack of the first swordsman broke its neck. The Skeleton Warrior's head fell on the ground, and its remaining body served as a sandbag for the angry swordsmen.

Looking at his mana drain away, Hyrkan could tell what was currently happening.

‘You dare do this to my servant....’

Hyrkan bit down on his lips. Death was routine for Skeleton Warriors. To begin with, it was strange to use such an expression. After all, Skeleton Warriors were undead type monsters. Even so, experiencing the destruction of his Skeleton Warriors, Hyrkan's mood turned sour.

Skeleton Warriors were his faithful servants. They never betrayed him, and they happily sacrificed their lives for him. Although that was because of their AI design, to Hyrkan who had experienced the bitter taste of betrayal, they were his servants and comrades. Hyrkan's blood was too hot to not rage over their death.

‘You bastards, I remember your faces. You just wait. Soon, I’m going to get my revenge...’

Suddenly.

‘Huh?’

Hyrkan flinched.

‘What’s this?’

The reason was his surrounding environment. What was in front of him was a never before seen terrain.

Up until now, Hyrkan had been moving in the Lizard Swamp like it was his own backyard. There wasn’t a place he didn’t know about. If Hyrkan really did not know about this place, he would lose his advantages.

Hyrkan became tense.

‘Reset? Event Field?’

If it was a place he knew, it was possible that the area was reset. In Warlord, plant life didn't grow randomly. Players used this feature to cut trees and cultivate the land. In such case, areas became reset depending on situation. After a certain period of time, if no players were nearby, an area go back to its original state.

Event Field was pretty much what it sounded like. It referred to fields changing to fulfill a role in an event. It was a chance to meet certain monsters or to find instance dungeons.

In any case, Hyrkan stayed vigilant of his surroundings.

As he was in a new area, he didn't know which part had deep swamps, which part was suitable for fighting, or which part could be used to cross the swamp.

At that moment, in front of Hyrkan's eyes, a black swamp made its appearance. The moment he saw the swamp, a sense of danger enveloped Hyrkan.

'If I go in there... it won't end well.'

Hyrkan threw one Skeleton Fragment towards the Swamp. Then, he snapped his fingers thrice.

After appearing on top of the black swamp, a Skeleton Warrior attempted to dance as its feet were struck in the swamp.

Meanwhile, Hyrkan concealed himself.



“The hell is that?”

After finding a Skeleton Warrior dancing in a black swamp, the group of players chasing Hyrkan could only be infuriated.

“That fucking necromancer. He’s playing with us...”

They were already irritated by Hyrkan’s running, but now that they were suddenly provoked, their anger reached their limit.

Of course, the swordsmen headed out to de stress. They entered the swamp and began to mercilessly dismantle the Skeleton Warrior. Then, someone spoke out.

“Don’t kill it! Just damage it so that fucking necromancer wastes his mana. Necromancers are useless without their mana anyways.”

At these words, the three swordsmen in the swamp nodded their heads. Meanwhile, the priests and magicians stood on guard with the rest of the swordsmen. Their target was an odd necromancer. Having been killed by him already, they knew they had to be on guard.

Suddenly.

“Hm?”

A priest that had been focusing all his senses on the black swamp blinked his eyes, as if he discovered something.

‘What’s that?’

He had caught sight of something. With swift, a 6 meter long monster swam across the black swamp.

Sssss!

The monster let out a bone-chilling sound as it approached three swordsmen and the dancing Skeleton Warrior.

“Caref...!”

Before the priest could finish his warning...

Pussh!

An enormous lizard exploded out from the black swamp. With its mouth wide open, the lizard...

Gulp!

Swallowed a swordsman whole before it quickly disappeared into the black swamp.

Someone had disappeared in the blink of an eye.

‘Huh?’

‘What just happened?’

At this sudden turn of events, all those watching froze in place. Only the Skeleton Warrior continued dancing. The only one who remained sane without panicking was the one hidden nearby, watching the whole thing happen.

It was, of course, Hyrkan.

When Hyrkan caught a glimpse of that monster, Hyrkan couldn't help but frown.

‘A Dragon Lizard. Don't tell me, ‘nest’ was referring to a Dragon Lizard's lair?’

Dragon Lizard.

As a level 40 boss monster, its defense, stamina, and attack were several times that of normal monsters.

Chapter 34. The Corrupted Stone (3)

Boss monsters have stats that are far beyond that of normal monsters at their level.

Just like people form a party of three or more people to hunt normal monsters, a bigger party is formed to hunt boss monsters. That is what is known as a raid.

Boss monsters appear in many ways. Those that regularly spawn in designated areas appear with what is known as a Field Reset. A period of time after the death of a boss, a field gets generated randomly for the boss monster to spawn.

The last Dragon Lizard raid happened one week ago.

In that case, it wasn't weird for a Dragon Lizard to appear a week after along with a Field Reset. Although it was strange for Hyrkan and his 10 pursuers to arrive here, it was an impossible matter.

Only, there was something Hyrkan couldn't understand.

‘A black swamp... was there such a setting?’

It was the existence of a black swamp.

As someone who aimed to hit level 30 in the Lizard Swamp, Hyrkan naturally had information on the Dragon Lizard. In fact,

he periodically checked for updated information on the Dragon Lizard. Furthermore, there were often public announcements before a boss monster raids began, warning players not to hinder the raid. During the time he stayed in the Lizard Swamp, Hyrkan naturally avoided the areas where Dragon Lizard raids were happening. At the same time, he made sure to gather information on how Dragon Lizard spawn areas looked like.

Characteristic such as a black swamp did not exist in Hyrkan's memory.

In other words, the black swamp in front of him was a special case.

‘Could it be?’

Ahimbree's quest immediately flashed through Hyrkan's mind. The nested egg Ahimbree mentioned was likely to be an egg inside a Dragon Lizard's home.

Once Hyrkan arrived at this conclusion, Hyrkan wanted to curse out loud.

‘No way.’

It was just too absurd.

‘You expect me to kill a monster that needs a level 40 average 20-man raid, and get its egg?’

The raid difficulty of Dragon Lizard was not high. For a boss monster, it was rather easy.

Even so, it was impossible to do it alone. In the first place, boss monsters weren't designed to be killed by a single player or a small group of players. Considering Ahimbree just casually gave out such a quest, Hyrkan was fully justified in wanting to curse.

In any case, now was Hyrkan's chance.

Of course, it wasn't easy for Hyrkan to kill the Dragon Lizard. However, it wasn't impossible. Hyrkan always fought boss monsters higher than his own level, and he had plenty of experience in battles. He was better than any professional. As Dragon Lizard was one of the easier boss monsters, it was possible for Hyrkan to kill it if he had to.

However, it was currently too risky. The chance of him being successful was less than 10%.

In such a case, there was only one answer.

‘As if I'd kill it.’

It wasn't worth it to risk his life.

Instead, this was a chance.

‘Hmm.’

Hyrkan stared at the nine players standing in a daze. Although they were shocked from having one of their comrades taken by the Dragon Lizard, it didn’t take long before they snapped back to the matter at hand. Soon, they changed from their defenseless state to that of tension and alertness.

‘Looks like they’ve got the basics down at least.’

Although they were fools who were tricked by a bunch of girls and lost their time and items to Hyrkan, they were at least level 30. At that level, it was inevitable that they went through a fair number of battles.

Even if they might not know the best course of action, they knew by instinct what had to be done first and foremost.

“Damn it. Alright, get ready!”

The first one to come to his senses organized his thoughts and gave an order.

“It’s a Dragon Lizard! You want to fight it?”

Someone voiced his doubts. In truth, it was a stupid question. If he was experienced in battle, he would have questioned the

method.

“Even if we are running, we have to get ready.”

“Why don’t we try? Don’t you think we have a chance if all nine of us try our best?”

One member voiced a somewhat crazy suggestion. Listening to their conversation from afar, Hyrkan smirked in response.

‘Idiot. You can’t even catch me and you want to kill a Dragon Lizard?’

In the meanwhile, the two swordsmen who were standing in the swamp began to turn and walk out. They knew that if they were attacked in the swamp, they would have little chance to even struggle. It was an obvious choice.

‘You wish.’

Watching this scene, Hyrkan could hardly sit still.

Hyrkan snapped his fingers twice. The look in the dancing skeleton’s eyes changed. The Skeleton Warrior burned with intent to fight.

To such Skeleton Warrior...

“Madness Helm.”

Hyrkan poured more fuel to light his fire.

“Bone Armor.”

He even supplied more wood to ensure the fire did not go out.

With Hyrkan’s magic, two horns sprouted out from the Skeleton Warrior’s head along with a scarlet luster in its eyes. Its empty rib cage began filling, and what appeared in place was an armor-like upper body made of bones.

In this state, the Skeleton Warrior quickly approached the two players who had turned their backs on him.

With his aggressive nature amplified by Madness Helm, the Skeleton Warrior ran towards the two players without hesitation.

“Careful!”

When someone caught sight of this, he obviously warned the two swordsmen. The two swordsmen then turned their heads to look behind them.

“Shit!”

The Skeleton Warrior was only a few seconds away from reaching them. With no other choice, one swordsman raised his sword with a bitter voice.

“I’ll take him!”

“Thanks!”

He thought to sacrifice himself, and the other voiced his gratitude as he continued on his way.

The seven remaining players were watching attentively.

“Let’s help.”

“Magicians, prepare your magic. Priests, prepare to heal!”

At this moment, they were entirely focused on saving their allies.

Having seen such sight, Hyrkan chuckled.

‘This must be their first boss raid. Come on guys, that should be the least of your concerns.’

As if to respond to Hyrkan’s laugh, the Dragon Lizard appeared from the right flank of the seven players. When Hyrkan caught sight of this, he quickly threw himself into the swamp.



What was the most important thing in a boss raid?

When asked this question, many would answer in different ways. Some might say it's the existence of a powerful magician, a tank to attract aggro, a striker to fight on the front line, or a priest to keep others alive. However, those who experienced countless number of boss raids did not care about these trifling things. They answered in a simple manner.

Eliminating the variable!

The variable implied any hostile monsters or players that was not the boss monster.

This was why luring ability was so important. Before starting the boss monster hunt, skilled guilds or raid parties first sought to lure non-boss monsters away from the boss.

With this in mind, a fully-buffed Skeleton Warrior was the greatest, yet the worst, variable.

Furthermore, this wasn't just an ordinary Skeleton Warrior.

It was a D-rank Skeleton Warrior under an E-rank Madness Helm effect. A Skeleton Warrior with such specs was something a level 40 necromancer would summon.

To make it worse, this Skeleton Warrior was one that received daily, one on one, training from Hyrkan. Its evasion ability was far above an average Skeleton warrior, and something that an average or below-average swordsman couldn't handle for long.

‘This god damn skeleton!’

Not only did it easily evade any attacks, it even counterattacked afterwards. Against such an opponent, the swordsman let out every single curse word in his arsenal.

In the meanwhile, the Dragon Lizard was running towards the seven players grouped together like bowling pins. Taking notice of the Dragon Lizard, the seven players had no other choice but to separate. Otherwise, the clash would surely result in a strike.

Unfortunately, it wasn't that easy to separate. It was largely due to the fact that they were distracted by the Skeleton Warrior.

In the end...

Gulp!

A priest had been swallowed by the Dragon Lizard.

“Fuck!”

As he disappeared into the Dragon Lizard's mouth, the priest let out an uncouth scream. Of course, it wasn't much of a spectacle. Boss raids were generally filled with all sorts of foul language.

Meanwhile, the Skeleton Warrior drove its opponent into a corner.

Having received an order from its master, it showed no signs of wanting to stop.

After seeing the Skeleton Warrior pushing back the swordsman, the swordsman that had escaped thanks to his sacrifice stopped in place.

‘Damn it!’

On land, seven players were in fierce combat with the Dragon Lizard. In that case, it might be better to go save his comrade than to run. Thinking this, the swordsman turned and started his way back in the muddy swamp.

Suddenly, a fireball struck the back of the player fighting against the Skeleton Warrior. The swordsman on his way to save him stopped, startled.

“What are you doing?”

“S-Sorry, it was a mistake!”

The magician had tried to help, but ended up striking his ally.

“You retard, watch where you’re throwing that thing!”

The swordsman angrily cursed at his comrade. It was the typical scenario for failure.



Monsters had different characteristics depending on their type. Of these, the most representative were dragon-type monsters.

Dragon-type monsters made nests.

The so-called lairs.

Inside these lairs were treasures. There were crafting materials as a start, and when these monsters killed players, they kept their fully crafted items inside their lairs.

Because of this, it wasn’t rare for players to avoid fighting dragon-type monsters and just loot their lairs.

This was the so-called sneak-thieving

It was something that happened quite often in Warlord.

Considering the high profit one would gain at low risk, it was only obvious. Although it was no different than burglary, one wouldn't be punished for it. Furthermore, there were demands for sneak-thieving videos, albeit not as much as raids. After all, adventures to find hidden treasures have always been used as motives for movies, Indiana Jones being the most prominent.

Hyrkan had much experience in this as well.

As a result, Hyrkan remained on high alert as he jumped from tree to tree like a monkey, looking for the Dragon Lizard's lair. As he moved, Hyrkan summoned a Skeleton Warrior and put him just standing in the swamp. It was a bait, and at the same time, a warning signal. If this Skeleton Warrior was attacked, Hyrkan's magic power would deplete and notify him that the Dragon Lizard was on his way.

About 15 minutes after Hyrkan's search started...

‘Okay.’

Hyrkan caught sight of what looked like a large beaver dam. The large nest was about 3600 square feet, which was large enough for a country house to cover. Hyrkan immediately began to climb the nest as if he was rock climbing. Inside the nest were several objects, metals and gems.

One of them...

‘Is this an egg?’

Resembled an egg.

‘Isn’t this a rock?’

However, it was more fittingly a rock than an egg. An egg-shaped rock, one might say.

Even Hyrkan could not understand what it was. Of course, as he questioned it in his mind, he quickly changed crafting materials into coins and put them in his pocket. As he could not change the ‘egg’ into a coin, he simply wrapped it up and wore it behind him like a bag. Then, he quickly ran out from the lair.

At that moment, Hyrkan’s magic power depleted in a breeze. It signaled the death of the Skeleton Warrior he had summoned to distract the nine players.

Hyrkan tightly shut his mouth.

He still had something left unfinished.



By the time Hyrkan returned to the battlefield, it was in complete chaos.

Signs of the Dragon Lizard's struggle was apparent in his surroundings. Fire still burned, most likely from the magic cast by the magicians. Among these flames, Hyrkan caught sight of shining watches.

Hyrkan looked over all the chaos, and something that had escaped the Dragon Lizard's eyes caught Hyrkan's sight.

“What's up?”

It was a survivor.

He was the sole survivor, one who had hid himself amidst the death of his allies. Because the Dragon Lizard suddenly dashed off, he was able to survive. This, of course, was caused by Hyrkan entering the Dragon Lizard's lair.

In a way, Hyrkan was the one who saved his life.

Of course, this was something the player had no way of knowing. Even if he did, he would not look at Hyrkan as one would look at his savior.

In any case, the player found his current situation simply... absurd.

Over ten players had gathered for revenge. It was something that rarely happened even in Warlord. That being the case, he was confident. No matter how strong Hyrkan might be, he thought it

was impossible for him to take on all ten of them by himself.

He had never expected the situation to turn to this.

He couldn't even be angry.

He was simply shocked beyond belief.

He stared at Hyrkan without a word. On the other hand, Hyrkan examined the arm and facial colors of the player in front of him.

‘He’s poisoned.’

Likely from the Dragon Lizard’s poison, the player’s right arm was turning black as charcoal, and black marks stained across his face. If a priest were present, he would be healed in an instant, but it was clear that would not be the case.

If left alone, he would undoubtedly die.

Of course, if he wanted to struggle to his bitter end, it was possible. A person at his last breadth was always the most dangerous.

Despite this fact, Hyrkan shortened the distance between them.

“Warlord is one hell of a game, isn’t it? It drives you crazy in the

strangest of ways.”

The dying player stared intently at Hyrkan as he approached him. He was currently contemplating quite a bit.

On one hand, he wanted to harm Hyrkan even if it meant quickening his own death. On the other, everything felt to be in vain. He felt it would be useless no matter what he did.

“You fucker...”

In the end, he only moved his mouth.

Watching the player in front of him, Hyrkan tapped his hahoe mask with his finger.

“Let’s take this opportunity to get things straight. Remember this mask. If you ever see it again, you’re going to want to run. Because if I find you first... I’ll make you repeat what you just said.”

At this, the player became enraged as he attempted to swing his fist towards Hyrkan.

However...

Stab!

Hyrkan simply dodged his fist, and stabbed his sword in his eyes, which could be seen between the gap in his helmet. Not once, but several times. He was merciless as he continuously stabbed at him like a machine.

Chwing!

As Hyrkan pulled out the sword, it scratched the helmet, causing a metallic sound to ring out. This screech which could be heard only by Hyrkan was more terrifying than ever before.

The player had been force logged out long ago.

Although Hyrkan was well aware of this fact, he continued to stab him until only his watch remained.

In the end, his corpse melted down, leaving behind only his watch, which Hyrkan was quick to pick up.

‘If you keep coming even after this, then it’s war.’

This was something Hyrkan picked up from his time fighting against the Stormhunter Guild and the Hahoe Mask Guild that betrayed him. It wasn’t enough to just kill them. He had to make them never want to play Warlord again.

Of course, Hyrkan wasn’t done with things just yet. He knew the other party would be the same.

‘Next time I see you, I’ll kill you again.’

Hyrkan once again pledged revenge and punishment as he turned around and stared back at the black swamp.

He didn’t stare at it for long.

Soon after, he turned his back and began to run as far as possible from the black swamp.

As he ran, he began to search for guilds or raid parties in the vicinity of Bangtz Castle. When he was done, he picked one and contacted them.

“The Dragon Lizard has respawned in the Lizard Swamp. I’m selling the exact location for 100 dollars.”

A few minutes afterwards, he got a response.

– What’s your account number?

It was his final bit of profit from the Lizard Swamp.

Chapter 35. Skeletons Hunting Skeletons (1)

The moment Hyrkan acquired the nested egg, he ran towards Bangtz Castle without rest.

‘Quicker, quicker!’

Once he arrived at Bangtz Castle, Hyrkan quickly changed his clothes and headed towards Bangtz Castle’s Subjugation Association. Then, he charged towards Ahimbree’s room.

‘What was that just now?’

‘Didn’t something just go upstairs?’

All the hyenas on standby didn’t even have a chance to try anything.

The reason Hyrkan moved so hurriedly was simple.

‘I have to bail before they get on my tail.’

Ahimbree’s test was at the Lizard Swamp, and Hyrkan passed that test. If the ones who approached Hyrkan before found out, they would surely act. As such, Hyrkan wanted to quickly finish his business with Ahimbree before they sought out to look for the player who received Ahimbree’s quest.

Hyrkan quickly arrived at Ahimbree's floor, and he then ran to Ahimbree's room. He slammed open the door, after which he placed the egg he brought on Ahimbree's desk like he just made a touchdown.

Ahimbree simply watched on with a blank expression. It wasn't until a while afterwards that he opened his mouth.

"You came faster than I had expected."

Ahimbree said in a calm voice, at which Hyrkan bowed his head.

"I tried my best."

Although he answered as such, Hyrkan was gritting his teeth on the inside.

'Faster than you expected? Even though it took over 20 days?'

Hyrkan headed to the Lizard Swamp as soon as he received Ahimbree's quest and spent the following 20 days there. Although he spent most of the time leveling up, the time it took to complete Ahimbree's quest was undoubtedly 20 days.

But Ahimbree said it was faster than he had expected.

'What a crazy game.'

A concept unimaginable in any other game. That was Warlord.

Hyrkan's stray thoughts quickly disappeared as he pricked up his ears. He didn't want to miss a single word Ahimbree would say. He had no other choice. It wasn't often that one was given a chance to participate in the main scenario quest. In truth, the test this time around wasn't something Hyrkan could have finished by himself. Even if he found the Dragon Lizard, he didn't have the ability to deal with it alone.

"First of all, well done."

"Thank you sir."

"I do want to ask, do you know what this is?"

As if he could read Hyrkan's mind, Ahimbree immediately cut to the chase.

"I do not."

"Corrupted Stone, that's what I call it."

'Oh, that's what this was?'

Hyrkan finally understood the identity of the stone he brought.

Corrupted Stone!

It was something that played a core role in the Corrupted Count main scenario quest. Although he had heard stories of the Corrupted Stone, this was the first he had actually seen it.

‘To think I’d end up seeing it like this.’

Before he returned to the past, he couldn’t even act as extra in the Corrupted Count or the Immoral Prince main scenario quest. At that time, he was busy leveling up and filming videos.

‘If this goes well...’

Hyrkan was suddenly full of expectations.

The reason he knew about the Corrupted Stone was because it was material for a Chronical Unique, just like the Pursuer of Corruption Necklace he had. Of course, he couldn’t just use it as it is. Hyrkan couldn’t remember the fine details from his hazy memory, but he knew there was a fairly complicated process involved. It was something the current Hyrkan couldn’t do.

In any case, if things went well, a fortune might land on his head. One like the Pursuer of Corruption Necklace.

Or if Ahimbree gave this Corrupted Stone to Hyrkan... it wouldn’t be until later, but he would be able to sell it for an enormous sum.

Gulp!

Hyrkan tensed up slightly. It was as if he bought 100,000 won worth of lottery tickets and was now watching the draw live.

With no way of knowing what Hyrkan was thinking, Ahimbree simply continued.

“Because of this Corrupted Stone, monsters have become drunk on the Corrupted One’s powers and have been causing problems.”

“Then we must find these stones and destroy them.”

Hyrkan answered immediately. He was simply telling Ahimbree to give him another quest so he could find the stones.

“With your strength, it is impossible to destroy this stone. Furthermore, there is an even more important matter at hand. Where did this stone come from? If these stones are not moving by themselves, then who is transporting them? These are the questions we must seek to answer.”

“Then we will need to find the mastermind and punish him. I will do so. Although I may be lacking, I will do my best to punish the evildoer who is hiding in the shadows!”

‘Hurry up and give me the next quest!’

Hyrkan pleaded in his mind. At this...

“Your strength is not enough.”

Ahimbree poured cold water over Hyrkan.

‘What?’

After he did so...

“But you have the potential. What is important to you now is not to fight against them, but to acquire the strength to do so.”

[The Quest, ‘Ahimbree’s Teachings (2)’, starts.]

He immediately threw hot water, a bucket of lava, at Hyrkan.

‘Wow!’

Hyrkan barely managed to hold in his desire to scream out loud.

‘Ahimbree’s Teachings? Skillbook?’

But Hyrkan’s patience...

[You have obtained the title, ‘Ahimbree’s Disciple’.]

“Whooaaa!”

Quickly ran out after hearing the following message. Hyrkan instinctively raised his hands in the air and shouted out. It seemed as if he wanted to hug Ahimbree to show his happiness.

“Mmm?”

Watching Hyrkan’s figure, Ahimbree tilted his head with a stiff expression.

“What does that mean?”

It was then that Hyrkan snapped back to reality and wiped the elated expression off of his face.

“Ah, well...”

It was the birth of another shameful moment in Hyrkan’s Warlord history.



[Ahimbree’s Teachings (2)]

- Quest Rank: Unique
- Quest Level Range: Above 30

- Quest Content: Go see Ahimbree after achieving level 40.
- Quest Reward: Skillbook, Pursuer of Corruption Ring

[Ahimbree's Disciple]

- Increases the class-specific stats by 3%.

After reading about the two new alerts, Hyrkan couldn't help but to tremble in joy.

‘To think I would get the Ahimbree's Disciple title here?’

The Ahimbree's Disciple title was something all magicians wanted.

It raised class-specific stats in a percentage.

Along with the Rising Star title, Hyrkan's stats had a whole 6% increase.

That wasn't all!

‘So I'm getting another skillbook just by hitting level 40?’

He had a chance to gain a skillbook similar to Madness Helm.

‘I just have to hit level 40.’

Once Hyrkan achieved level 40, everything would be his. Not only would he receive a new Unique magic, he would be able to learn the Golem Summon magic he had wanted to learn originally. In addition, he would have the right to continue to the next main scenario quest!

Then, there was only one thing left to worry about.

Where could the current level 30 Hyrkan hit level 40 in the quickest time possible?

It only took a second for Hyrkan to come up with an answer.

‘Next is the Dead Woods.’

Dead Woods.

It was terrifying woods filled with undead monsters.



The Lizard Swamp was currently in an uproar. Trees that shot up to the sky were now burning due to flame magic. The whole scene looked like torches lighting up the black swamp, making the swamp give off an eerie aura.

In the middle of the swamp lied a huge lizard that resembled a

dragon. Its body had just begun to melt, and one could easily tell that it was the boss of the Lizard Swamp, the Dragon Lizard.

“That’s it!”

A loud voice rang out in the swamp, and as if they had been waiting to hear this voice, multiple voices rang out in response.

“Whew! It’s over!”

“It’s been a while.”

“Well done everyone!”

“We finally got a big one. Good work, everyone!”

Along with these voices, players that had been assigned across the swamp began to make their appearance.

They were a raid-specializing guild that were active around Bangtz Castle, the Apom Guild.

They were a group of players that loved raids, but they couldn’t be called talented in any way. They sought to enjoy raids, Warlord’s core content, rather than to make money off of it. In a way, they were like a college circle.

“Thank you so much. You’re better than the rumors say. We expected at least five of us to die, but all of us made it out alive.”

As soon as the battle ended, the leader of the raid party approached a player and bowed.

“Don’t mention it. Everyone’s skills made it much easier.”

In front of the bowing raid party leader was a man wearing a lustrous, white-scaled armor. It was evident to anyone that was watching that this man was a high-level player, one that didn’t have a reason to participate in a level 40 boss monster raid.

He was a Helper.

More formally, a Raid Helper. Raids were the best part of Warlord. However, their difficulty was also high. One had to gather players, create the strategy for raid, and maintain coordination between all the members of party during raid. Above all, one had to be skilled. Those that wanted to raid but did not have the skills or ability to do so had no choice but to hire others with skills and experience to help them. In Warlord, they were known as Helpers.

They were different from the ones who simply helped lower level players leech and level up. Helpers didn’t hunt boss monsters by themselves. They directed the boss raid and ensured that their customers enjoyed the raids to their fullest.

In any case, when one hired Helpers, the employer generally gave up on making profit. In fact, there were cases where one ended up with a loss. Even so, the demand for skilled helpers was always high. After all, only a small minority were truly skilled at raids.

“Ah, here. Though it may not be much, here’s some gold.”

Once the work was done, good Helpers generally received tips from their employer.

“There’s no need. I’m happy with what we agreed upon beforehand.”

Declining once was also the general practice.

“Take it, really. It’s nothing, just a drink’s worth.”

After such exchange of pleasantries, both parties generally ended their business with a smile.

“Sorry.”

This time, however, the Helper was resolute. The leader of raid party examined the Helper’s expression, from which he could tell that he was unwilling to accept the tip.

The raid party leader picked up on the clue and put the bag of gold back in his pocket.

‘Just like I thought, he’s definitely not an average Helper. He’s too strong. Although the amount we paid wasn’t small, it definitely wouldn’t be enough to hire someone of his level...’

At this moment, the raid party leader once again recalled the suspicion he had before the raid started.

In raids where a Helper was present, a Broker was usually involved. Brokers found out the location of the boss and prepared the Helper in return for a commission fee. With the amount of money exchanged in Warlord, the amount of money a Broker or Helper handled was bigger than an average person might expect.

Of course, how much the employer paid decided how strong a Helper he would get.

In that sense, the Helper in front of the raid party leader was undoubtedly above the amount he paid for. Although a Helper below the amount one paid for sometimes came, a Helper above the amount one paid for was unheard of.

“By the way, as we talked about beforehand, I’ll be taking all the items inside the Dragon Lizard’s lair.”

Furthermore, this time, the Helper insisted on taking the ownership of the items inside the Dragon Lizard’s lair. Such a thing was also unheard of.

“Of course.”

Why would he risk his life for a Dragon Lizard’s lair? Although it was common knowledge that dragon-type monsters’ lairs had expensive crafting materials items, lairs of newly spawned monsters were empty. Dragon-type monsters stored items of the players they killed. It was unlikely for a monster that had recently respawned to have many items.

Even so, this Helper placed such importance on the Dragon Lizard’s lair. It was strange in many ways.

“We will help you look for the lair.”

Of course, it was none of the raid party leader’s business. Considering how cheap the Helper was, he didn’t have any reason to say no.

“It’s fine. I can take care of it by myself.”

With that, the armored Helper turned around and stared into the black swamp.

‘To think I would be able to find a Corrupted Stone in a place like this.’

Just like the raid party leader suspected, this Helper wasn’t one that would participate in a raid of this level.

He was on a completely different level.

One that could participate as a Helper for the Top 30 Guilds.

There was only one reason he was in a place like this.

Black swamp. It was a chance to acquire a Corrupted Stone.

In other words, Corrupted Stones were important enough to make someone of his level take action.

‘A Corrupted Dragon Lizard only appears when someone with Ahimbree’s Test and the Corrupted Count quest is active in the Lizard Swamp for at least one week... who could it be?’

With that, he headed out to find the Dragon Lizard’s lair.

A few minutes afterwards...

“FUCK!”

The scream of a man shook the Lizard Swamp.

Chapter 36. Skeletons Hunting Skeletons (2)

Hyrkan had a fond memory of undead monsters.

Before returning to the past, when Hyrkan and Kim Dongsoo wandered from hunting ground to hunting ground in order to hit level 40, although they edited and uploaded the hunting videos they made, they didn't get all too great of a response. 'It must be because our levels are too low...' although they told themselves such things, they couldn't help but wonder if they were overestimating themselves.

What blew away their doubts was their video made while hunting undead monsters. The video of Hyrkan and Kim Dongsoo flying through the woods filled with undead monsters hit 100,000 views in a month, and served as one of the stepping stones for the foundation of the Hahoe Mask Guild.

Hyrkan once again planned to use undead monsters as a stepping stone to a higher stage.

First, Hyrkan made his order of priority.

'First and foremost, I need a weapon.'

Now that he was level 30, he needed to find items appropriate for a level 30 character. Of these, the most important was the weapon.

'Blunt weapons are the best for crushing skeletons.'

The fact that blunt weapons were more effective than sharp weapons in dealing with undead type monsters was something even beginners could understand.

Of course, no magicians would use blunt weapons to kill undead type monsters.

Because of this...

“Hm?”

While Hyrkan was browsing through the item auction site, he found an extremely cheap blunt weapon.

[Magician's Hammer]

*Main properties

- Rare-rank Item
- Magic power +35
- Required level: 30
- Required Condition: Magician Class

*Miscellaneous

- This item was crafted for magicians and magicians only.

Magician's Hammer.

‘What idiot's work is this?’

It was a ridiculous item. A blunt weapon that only magicians can equip?

‘How out of your mind do you have to be to make something like this.?’

Simply put, it was completely useless. It wasn’t something someone in the right mind would create.

There was nothing to say about its price.

‘Let’s see. It’s... 550 gold.’

550 gold.

It was about 550,000 won. It was a rather high price for what is only a level 30 weapon. However, in Warlord’s current market, 550,000 won for a Rare-rank level 30 weapon was a practically a giveaway. Nevertheless, the fact that it still has not been sold showed just how truly useless this item was. Furthermore, it raised magic power, not intelligence. When given the choice between magic power and intelligence, magicians almost always chose intelligence.

‘Well, not that I mind.’

In any case, it was a newly found advantage of being an all-

strength necromancer. An item that no one would ever use was exactly what he needed.

Hyrkan purchased the item immediately, his gun already reloaded for anything he might need.

2000 gold!

That was the bullet he prepared. If need be, he intended to buy more bullets.

‘The market price is just too much. If I want to get a full set... I’m going to need at least 4000 gold.’

The price of level 30 equipment with nice magic power and intelligence stats was enormous. At the same time, some Unique items went by tens of thousands of gold.

In most games, the average level of players went up, and the price of low level items dropped. However, that was not the case for Warlord. In fact, because of the explosive influx of new players, the price was on the rise. This exponential growth would continue for at least 3, 4 years. After all, there were currently a million players playing Warlord, and the number would rise to ten million.

As Hyrkan knew this fact better than anybody, he did not complain about the price.

Only, he sought for ways to acquire items for a cheaper cost.

Of course, Hyrkan already had some methods in mind.

“... Jesus, who’s making these things?”



A striped snapback with a New York Yankees logo on top, a studded leather jacket seemingly from the end of the last century, tight floral shorts, rain boots that rose up to the knees, and a massive sledgehammer hanging by the waist for the finishing touch... it was truly something unbearable to watch.

After checking out his getup, Hyrkan couldn’t help but want to explode in shame.

‘This is just too much.’

Although the Goblin Leather set he wore at level 20 looked ridiculous, it at least shared a common theme of being made of leather. It was something one could pass off with ‘he must have a strange taste!’

But Hyrkan’s current fashion...

It was something not even comedians would wear. If it was funny

like before, he could at least pass it off as a concept. But this... this was on a complete different level. Anyone who saw it would simply freeze in shock.

In truth, as Hyrkan spent all his effort to save even a single gold, he didn't consider how they would go together.

Rather, he didn't think it would be this bad.

'Who the hell made this? These shorts...'

In particular, his tight floral shorts were something no one in the right mind would make.

'It must have been made for a female player.'

It was the type that required a beautiful girl to pull off. If a grown-up man were to wear it...

'Well, at least I won't have to worry about how to disgust the enemy in PKs.'

His entire self was asking for a fight.

Hyrkan was certain. Before he reached level 40, there would be at least one player who came after him just because he didn't like his fashion.

‘Haaa, once I get my hands on some money, I’ll get myself a cool full set... kuk.’

His grumbling ended there.

Hyrkan changed his item slot into the default Subjugation Association clothes. The only difference was that he now had a hammer, not a sword, around his waist. He returned to his poor, pushover appearance.

‘That’s it for the preparations.’

Hyrkan had finished setting his items.

At the same time, he had already learned his free skill from the Class Tower.

[Skeleton Magician]

- Proficiency: Rank F
- Number of Summonable Skeleton Magicians: 1
- You can summon a Skeleton Magician instead of a Skeleton Warrior.
- You can summon 1 more skeleton with Skeleton Fragment.

Skeleton Magician.

Simply put, of the 4 skeletons Hyrkan could currently summon

with the Skeleton Fragment skill, one would be a Skeleton Magician.

When the Skeleton Magician skill-rank rose, Hyrkan would be able to summon more Skeleton Magicians. At the same time, the number of skeletons he could summon with Skeleton Fragment would go up.

Most importantly, it was a necessary skill to learn Golem Summon at level 40.

‘How long will my magic power last?’

The amount of magic power required to summon Skeleton Magicians was 1.5 times that of Skeleton Warriors. In addition, Skeleton Magicians expended Hyrkan’s magic power whenever they used magic.

Even if he could safely hold out now, Hyrkan wondered how he would hold up with the addition of Golems at level 40. As things stood now, he was certain his progress would be halted by his lack of magic power. In the end, he would need help from items. However, as Hyrkan’s level rose, the items he needed only got more expensive. Most of all, to cover for the areas he was lacking in, he would need items that were considered top-tier even in Warlord.

If he couldn’t get his hands on these items, raid solo play would be but an empty dream.

It just went to show how Hyrkan's path was filled with hardships and difficulties.

Of course, a path filled with hardships was still a path.

With a sigh, Hyrkan reached out to his waist and held up the hammer. Thanks to investing all his stat points into strength, the hammer felt light as a feather.

'I've come this far. If there isn't a path, I'll just have to make one.'



There was a Skeleton Warrior with a bull's head. Two horns strutting out from its long skull gave it quite a fearsome impression. Anyone with a bit of insight could tell that this Skeleton Warrior was made from the rare level 40 monster, the Hammering Cow.

Perhaps due to being made from a Hammering Cow, the Skeleton Warrior handled the massive hammer in its hands with extreme proficiency. Using this hammer, the Skeleton Warrior swiftly dodged the attacks of a human-shaped skeleton in front of it, then counterattacked when it saw an opening.

Crack!

Watching the skeleton's head fly off with a single attack, Hyrkan

shouted.

“Oh! Nice shot!”

Along with his words, Hyrkan snapped his fingers twice. As if to pound rice into flour, other Skeleton Warriors began to smash the headless skeleton's body. Soon, the skeleton's body was completely destroyed, as it fell to the ground. Only, the skeleton's body received even harsher treatment as it lied on the ground.

Watching the process unfold, Hyrkan smiled.

‘Fantastic.’

For each Hammering Cow Skeleton Warrior Fragments, he had paid over 200,000 won. Hammering Cow bones were hard to come by and was a popular material at the same time. Even so, Hyrkan didn't feel like he wasted any money.

‘Yep, skulls should be crushed alright.’

While Hyrkan was staring admiration, a skeleton was approaching him with a dagger in hand. In only an instance, it neared Hyrkan's back.

When it was close enough to reach Hyrkan, it unhesitatingly slashed down towards Hyrkan's back.

As if it was the simplest thing to do...

Whish!

Hyrkan turned his body and dodged the attack. As he did, with the hammer in his hand...

Crack!

He smashed the skeleton's head. Its head bounced off a nearby tree trunk and rolled back near Hyrkan and its body. The headless skeleton did not panic, and once again swung its dagger at Hyrkan.

This was the characteristic of undead monsters. Losing a part of their body did not mean a thing. Even without their heads, they didn't have any trouble seeing in front of them.

In fact, their bodies got lighter and...

Whish, whish!

Their attacks faster.

But that was it. It wasn't fast enough to make Hyrkan panic.

Hyrkan easily dodged more swings of the headless skeleton by ducking low. As he did, he grabbed the skeleton's head from the

ground. Then, he held the hammer close to its head and began to quickly strike the skeleton's head.

Clack, clack, clack!

He looked like a Buddhist monk hitting his wooden bell.

‘Great sound.’

It was the strategy for hunting skeleton-type monsters.

To kill undead monsters, one had to deal as much damage as possible, to make their HP as close to 0 as possible. It was important to continuously deal damage to them. Otherwise, they would continue to move even if one broke their head or pelvis.

The key was to use this point to one's advantage.

By continuously hitting its skull, Hyrkan could continuously deal damage to it.

At the same time, this was something he could do even while running. It was fine as long as he wasn't bitten. This was the most important part.

Hyrkan looked around him.

‘Geez, they’re like a wild pack of dogs.’

Just now, he had fought against two skeletons. He couldn’t just sit there and wait.

They mobbed.

10 skeletons entered Hyrkan’s field of vision.

This was why undead monsters were difficult to hunt. Although anybody could kill one, skeletons in the area gathered to help the skeleton being attacked. When they did, one would find themselves surrounded.

Being surrounded by skeletons caused quite a bit of headache.

As such, one shouldn’t expect the fight to end with the first encounter. Once one dealt sufficient damage, one needed to move to the next area immediately. Of course, if one moved completely randomly, that person would just end up gathering even more skeletons. As such, it was important to move within predesignated areas, so as to avoid being surrounded.

To Hyrkan, this was as natural as breathing.

Tap, tap!

Hyrkan continued to smack the skeleton’s head as he moved to

the next area. Skeleton Warriors, of course, followed suit.

At that time, a skeleton with a large frame blocked the path of Hyrkan and his Skeleton Warriors. It was a monster on a completely different scale than the ones Hyrkan had faced so far.

‘Oh, a Skeleton Warrior?’

At a height of 3 meters, it was wearing a helmet and a breastplate large enough to cover its entire upper body. In addition, it was equipped with a large shield and a long sword to match its size.

It was a Skeleton Warrior.

It was a rare monster similar to a Lizard Warrior. At the same time, its strength was incomparable to ordinary skeletons.

‘Did it just respawn?’

It was Hyrkan’s first encounter with the Skeleton Warrior since he entered the Dead Woods.

The Skeleton Warrior was blocking Hyrkan’s way.

In an instant, Hyrkan analyzed the Skeleton Warrior in front of it.

‘The head would be too hard.’

Due to its height, it seemed impossible to smash off its head.

As the thought flashed by Hyrkan’s mind, the distance between Hyrkan and the Skeleton Warrior had been shortened even further.

The Skeleton Warrior was the first one to strike.

Whoosh!

It swung the sword in its hand horizontally, clearly aiming to behead Hyrkan with a single blow. The heavy sound caused Hyrkan to believe it wasn’t entirely impossible.

In any case, Hyrkan dodged the attack by lowering his body.

At the same time...

Crack!

As he passed by the Skeleton Warrior’s left side, he smashed his hammer down at the Skeleton Warrior’s kneecap.

‘There goes one.’

After passing by the Skeleton Warrior, Hyrkan quickly turned himself around and charged towards the Skeleton Warrior's back.

While the Skeleton Warrior was about to fall to its knee, Hyrkan once again smashed with his hammer.

Crack!

This time, at the back of its right knee. Then, having lost its balance, the Skeleton Warrior fell forward.

Snap, snap!

With two snaps, the nearby Skeleton Warriors raised their hammers into the air as if they had been waiting for this moment. Then, like lightning, they struck down on the Skeleton Warrior's body with full force.

Kwang!

Of these, two Skeleton Warriors even leaped into the air to shorten the distance between them and the Skeleton Warrior. Their nimbleness was something most Skeleton Warriors lacked. Their attack didn't end there. Four Skeleton Warriors struck down their hammers as if to play an instrument. The Skeleton Warrior's body could not regenerate as the Skeleton Warriors' attacks turned it into dust.

Watching this scene, Hyrkan once again smiled with satisfaction.

‘I don’t know who raised you all, but he did one hell of a job!’

Of course, the Skeleton Warrior wouldn’t die with just this. Even now, it was quickly recovering its shattered body. Meanwhile, the group of skeletons chasing after Hyrkan finally arrived.

Hyrkan turned around and checked their number.

‘Seven? They’re missing three. In that case...’

Hyrkan finished his battle calculations in an instant. He immediately reached into his pocket and threw out a small Skeleton Fragment.

When he did, a small black-boned Skeleton Magician made its appearance.

“Fire Boom!”

Hyrkan shouted out the chant for the magic.

The Skeleton Magician raised its hands up high.

Crackle!

A crimson ball of flame rose up between its skinny hands.

As if to play catchball, Hyrkan gestured like he was throwing the ball into the air. The Skeleton Magician then copied his gesture.

Whish!

The ball of flame quickly flew towards the group of skeletons.

Crash!

When it touched a skeleton, it exploded.

The explosion did not deal much damage to the skeletons. Although the body of the skeleton that was hit exploded, it seemed like it would recover in a moment. The rest of the skeletons suffered very little damage.

However, the explosion caused disarray in the skeleton pack's battle line.

Hyrkan snapped his fingers twice.

Then, Hyrkan's four Skeleton Warriors stopped their barrage of attacks on the Skeleton Warrior, and turned their heads towards the pack of skeletons. Then, without a shred of hesitation, they charged towards them.

Seven skeletons in complete disarray versus four skeleton

Warriors running in a proper line.

“I’ll give you a real headache!*”

[T/N: It’s a pun in Korean. I tried my best here, but in Korean, this ‘headache’ is more like a pain in the skull, hence the pun]

Then, the four Skeleton Warriors charged ahead of Hyrkan!

Victory was already decided at this point. Had this been a real war, the skeletons would have surrendered long ago.

Unfortunately for the skeletons, monsters did not come with such a feature. The skeletons reacted in a fixed way at the charging Skeleton Warriors and Hyrkan. Without getting back in formation, the skeletons charged towards them.

Two sides clashed.

The result was Hyrkan’s one-sided victory.

Chapter 37. Skeletons Hunting Skeletons (3)

Large build, thick armor, bone-chilling sword, and fire-like eyes that shone between the helmet's gap.

These were features that represented Skeleton Warriors. At the same time, these were the features of the grim reaper for any players hunting in the Dead woods.

However, the body of the Skeleton Warrior lying on the ground showed no signs of any of these features. Its shoulders and knees were completely busted, its armor was caved in as if it had been kicked multiple times, and its sword lied broken in half. Its helmet with the fire-like eyes...

Clack, clack, clack!

Was stuck under the shoulders of a man wearing a leather jacket as it was beaten up again and again.

It was a gruesome sight that was difficult to describe. If the Skeleton Warrior had human like emotions, it would undoubtedly be crying. Of course, the cause of this scene was none other than Hyrkan.

However, Hyrkan seemed to be in a bad mood as well.

‘This goddamn magic power.’

Until just a few minutes ago, he had been feeling better than he ever had. In fact, he had been feeling good since the start of the day's battle. He was in an even better condition than he had been at the Lizard Swamp. It wasn't just Hyrkan that was feeling this way. His Skeleton Warriors were showing much better movements than usual. The battle data they had accumulated so far was finally being reflected in their fights.

Here, Hyrkan decided.

‘Let's film a Time Attack video!’

He set his goal high.

To kill 100 skeletons in 100 minutes!

Of course, Hyrkan knew better than anyone else that this was impossible. Even so, there was nothing wrong with setting one's goals high. When he began, he was killing at an extremely fast pace. He even wondered if he could really achieve his goal.

However, his happiness quickly turned to disappointment due to his chronic disadvantage.

‘I know I'm an all-strength necromancer, but it's not like my magic power is that low compared to normal necromancers at my level...’

Lack of magic power.

It was especially more draining in bold and forceful battles. When he used Skeleton Magicians to speed up his hunting pace, he found his magic power disappearing into the air.

As a result, he had to cut down on the number of Skeleton Warriors, which was why only Hyrkan remained standing.

Now that he had finished off the Skeleton Warrior, Hyrkan immediately checked his stat window. Checking his stat window signified the end of a battle.

[Hyrkan]

- Level: 33
- Class: Magician
- Title: 9
- Stats: Strength (190) Stamina (30) Intelligence (101) / Magic Power (141)

141 points.

That was Hyrkan's current magic power stat.

Most necromancers distributed their stat points into magic power in a 1 to 4 ratio. In this case, disregarding the stat points from items, their pure magic power stat was 150. If one factored in their titles and items, it would be over 200 points. Of course, if the player was full of Unique items, it could be over 300 or even 400

points.

Compared to this, Hyrkan's magic power was indeed low. However, it was a fine number considering he was an all-strength necromancer. He had yet to run into any problems either.

Until now that is.

'So there's no problem if I'm driving safe, but once I step on the accelerator, my fuel runs out in a breeze.'

It was a problem only Hyrkan could understand.

His individual performance was exceptional. In terms of cars, he would be a Lamborghini. Of course there would be a problem if one put in regular fuel in it instead of premium.

'Tsk.'

In truth, it wasn't anything like a fatal problem. No one could run at full power forever. Most people that earned their living in Warlord did so by running safely and steadily. They only ran fast every once in a while. Warlord was a marathon, not a sprint.

Even so, it wasn't easy for him to ignore it after feeling the problem with his own body.

Most importantly.

‘It’s going to be real dangerous after level 40.’

At this rate, his problems would only get bigger with Golem Summon. No, Golem Summon wasn’t the problem. Once he hit level 40, Skeleton Fragment would rank up and he would have another Skeleton Warrior to summon.

In truth, he already had his answer.

‘Damn, if only I had the money.’

Money!

Everything would be taken care of if he had the right items.

It was a simple and obvious solution, yet something Hyrkan couldn’t do at the moment.

Then what should he do?

Efficiency.

He had to mind his fuel efficiency. He had to ensure his battles were as efficient as possible. Even if he fought boldly, aggressively, and assertively, he had to make sure his battles used as little magic power as possible. To do that, what he had to change was...

‘My condition is good, but not as much as in the past.’

Hyrkan himself.

Because of putting his Skeleton Warriors in front, he wasn’t doing as much as in the past. There was a difference between doing his best and being the best.

Hyrkan turned off his stat window.

‘I can’t make my skeletons work; I have to make myself work.’



Romany was currently bursting with excitement.

“Wow!”

Because of taking on so many boring and uninteresting works recently, he was about to go crazy from forcing himself to work. After a long time, however, he had received a request from a client that had once drove him crazy.

Hahoe Mask Hyrkan.

He had sent him an immense amount of battle videos, which

Romany picked at random to watch. It was just one. Even so, Romany spent a full hour watching the video from start to finish.

That's how good it was.

‘This is incomparable to those casuals. This is on a completely different level!’

He had seen countless number of videos from countless number of people. Although they probably sent what they believed to be one of their better fights, Romany had to forcefully edit and direct to make something barely passable.

However, Hyrkan's video was enough to make him shudder in fear. How could he make this better? It would be fine even on its own!

‘My god.’

His every movement was art. Others played what seemed like a turn-based game, but Hyrkan prevented his opponent from ever attacking as he poured attack after attack. Watching Hyrkan dodge attacks by the hairs-breadth was simply breathtaking.

The best part of it all...

‘Do they take after their owner? How can they move like this?’

Was that Hyrkan's Skeleton Warriors fought just as well.

One can dance alone, but it was even more marvelous when done in a group!

Not only that, their opponent was also a top choice.

Skeletons vs Skeletons!

Just thinking of the film's title made him shake in excitement.

The actual video was enticing as well. It was grotesque, yet captivating. As he watched, Romany found his heart beating fast.

There was just one problem.

'What's up with his getup? Is he wearing that on purpose? Or is there some sort of a problem?'

His fashion.

"Who's his fashion coordinator? Or did he do this on his own?"

In any case, it was Romany's job to make this look as good as possible. His scenario was already finished.

He even had a title in mind.

“Skull Clown.”

That would be the title of this film.



Baseball, soccer, basketball, etc. No matter what sport it may be, there were two factors that made their fans quiver in excitement. The first was the victory of the team they cheered for. The second... was the appearance of a super rookie. In particular, rookies caused not just one team, but the entire sports scene to be heated up.

It was the same in Warlord. There was now 2 months left until the 1-year anniversary. Because of recent appearances of super rookies, Warlord was currently heated up to the extreme.

- Fallout Online’s Rank 10, Rony Jackson joins the Hydra Guild!
- The Machine Rank 3rd, Ugo Sanchez joins Red Bull!

Recently, with top-tier players of other virtual reality games moving to Warlord, related articles, interviews, and videos were making headlines.

But, as always, it wasn’t the royal road that people were interested in, but the road of a jewel crawling up from the bottom to the top.

It was because of this.

Skull Clown!

The 15-minute video of Hahoe Mask Hyrkan fighting skeletons in the Dead Woods achieved 150,000 views in just 3 days of going public. Showing what seemed to be an infinite amount of potential, it signaled the appearance of another super rookie. Naturally, stories of Hyrkan began to circulate around the internet.

- I’ve seen this guy hunting by himself in the Lizard Swamp. It was amazing.
- I saw him too. He always hunts by himself. He’s the master of solo play. He never does party.
- After seeing this, I’m going to go make myself a necromancer.
- What’s up with his clothes? Isn’t it too much?
- He’s probably doing it on purpose. What sane person would wear this? He’s probably doing it to get attention.

With Hyrkan gaining all sorts of attention, there were those who didn’t see it in good light.

‘What’s this?’

Until her secretary, Park Suji, reminded her, Choi Sulyeon had forgotten about Hyrkan.

When she watched Hyrkan's new video, she was amazed from the bottom of her heart.

However, along with the end of the video, her amazement changed to suspicion. She asked Park Suji whether she had scouted him as she had asked, which Park Suji assured she had. When Choi Sulyeon asked what the result was, Park Suji replied that she didn't even get a response.

It was a justified suspicion.

The scout offer came from none other than the Stormhunter Guild. Even if he had no choice but to decline, it was proper manners to at least give a reply. No, rather than proper manners, it was the obvious thing to do.

However, there was nothing.

Then?

'Is he ignoring us?'

Never mind the refusal. There was great chance that he was ignoring them. The fact that he had been silent this entire time with nothing but a new video meant that he treated the Stormhunter Guild as no different than any of the other small guilds.

That being the case, Choi Sulyeon didn't think that Hyrkan was looking down on Stormhunter Guild. She didn't even consider that he would have a personal grudge against the Stormhunter Guild.

After all, it was impossible.

According to her standards, it was impossible for a Warlord player to act in such a way.

Instead, she came up with a different answer.

'Is he part of another guild? If he's some other guild's hidden card, it makes sense that he can't give a reply.'

That Hyrkan was part of a guild and was currently hiding his identity! That was the answer she came up with. It wasn't that she couldn't think of any other possibility. It was just that, to her, that was the only possibility.

"Hmph."

And this fact only served to fire her up. A treasure without an owner and a treasure with an owner. Although a treasure without an owner had more worth, there was a certain thrill and sense of achievement to stealing a treasure with an owner.

'If he grows, he can one day become the Stormhunter Guild's ace. He has just as much... no, even more potential than me.'

And just like that, Choi Sulyeon once again played Hyrkan's video, Skull Clown.

Chapter 38. Golden Skeleton (1)

‘2 minutes and 30 seconds.’

Looking at the result of the Climbing Test he just took, An Jaehyun shook his head.

‘It’s still not as good as it was when I was at my prime.’

Recently, An Jaehyun performed another Climbing Test. It was the first time since he visited Peach Store to buy a V-Gear. The time he got this time was 2 minutes 41 seconds, even longer than his last score at the Peach Store.

Even so, An Jaehyun wasn’t surprised. He was only bitter. Why? Because he had expected it.

It was only obvious. It has been a long time since An Jaehyun fought on the front lines with his life at risk. After the Hahoe Mask Guild’s betrayal, he was forced to quit Warlord.

Then, there was a long period of rest.

Even after he returned to the past, An Jaehyun’s battle style put safety first and foremost. Although he took risks when necessary, he avoided them otherwise.

Growth only came about through pushing past one’s limit. To

run a 100 meter in 9 seconds, one had to do so in 10 seconds countless number of times.

In any case, after this experience, An Jaehyun pushed himself more often in Warlord. He worked himself more diligently, more harshly, and more fiercely. He took the Climbing Test every day to measure his transformation. As a result, it didn't take long until he reduced his time to 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

Even so...

‘I still need to lose another 10 seconds from here. I must have been crazy back then. How did I do it?’

He was still far from his prime. It was only now, that An Jaehyun realized how much of a monster he truly was.

‘I'm the best alright.’

At the same time, he understood that no matter how strong his summons became, they would never be as strong as An Jaehyun himself. It wasn't an unjustified confidence. It was the truth, one that no one could argue about.

However, he had totally forgotten about it until recently. He had focused solely on making his skeletons stronger without minding to his own abilities.

‘Body Modification.’

Until recently, he had even forgotten about his plan to use his strong personal capabilities.

Summoning, Curses, and Body Modification!

These three must be what An Jaehyun aimed for. Without them, it would be impossible to achieve his goals. Even without just one of them, there would be no point to An Jaehyun's efforts. Even so, An Jaehyun couldn't even get started on Body Modification.

‘Damn money problems.’

The reason was, of course, money.

‘I have 3,000,000 won to spare.’

For someone who constantly complained about not having money, he had amassed a fair amount. At the moment, he could cash about 3,000,000 won, which could not be considered a small sum. If he were to liquidate all the items in his possession, he would have even more money. Considering the enormous amount of money it would take for other players to get as strong as Hyrkan, the amount Hyrkan had spent so far was impressive. Not to mention, he had started from nothing. If he were to make an autobiography, it would surely be a best seller.

‘I can buy Slow Curse and Skin Sewing with the money I have now but...’

If An Jaehyun really wanted to, he could buy Slow Curse, which was a higher tier skill than Demon Curse, and Skin Sewing, which was the start of Body Modification. The problem was the price of the two!

‘No matter how I look at it, spending over a thousand gold to buy them would be like wiping my ass with money.’

Slow Curse cost 1,000 gold on the market and Skin Sewing took 800 gold. The price of the two combined would be 1,800,000 won.

For a low level skill, they were expensive. Of course, there was a reason for it. Slow Curse and Demon Curse were skills that curse magicians used forever. Even if one wasn't a curse magician, a black magician would always learn these two skills.

In the case of Skin Sewing, the reason was a bit different. It was because Skin Sewing was the beginning skill of Body Modification. Beginning skills were always expensive, regardless of the class. Thankfully, skillbooks after it weren't so expensive.

Even so, it was a hefty sum to pay. Because of recent advertisements and events leading up to Warlord's 1-year anniversary, more people had begun to play Warlord. As such, the price of low level skill's skillbooks had skyrocketed.

‘I'd rather buy it if I can, but... well, I'll sleep on it I guess.’

With that, An Jaehyun threw himself on his bed. It was time to sleep.

‘Aaah, if only Romany’s film would go viral. If I can get a million views, I wouldn’t even need to worry about this. I would immediately buy the skillbooks, and maybe even change this goddamn fashion...’

An Jaehyun even made a small wish as he stared into the ceiling.

Of course...

‘If only...’

An Jaehyun laughed at this dumb wish. No matter how much he thought, it was a ridiculous wish.

With that, An Jaehyun fell asleep.



Once An Jaehyun started a game, he would put his all into finishing what he had planned to do. He knew that once he went off schedule, it would be hard to get back on it. If he got sick or something during that time, it would be even harder to get back on track. One week. If he threw away just one week, the distance between him and the front-runners would widen up again. It was the same for Rankers. Because of this, there was a saying that the enemies of Rankers weren’t their competitors, but cold.

But now.

“What?”

An Jaehyun had logged out, even though he hadn't fulfilled his quota. Having taken off his helmet, he was wearing a surprised expression. As An Jaehyun was someone who wouldn't flinch while watching his house burn down, it was indeed a strange thing.

That explained how surprised An Jaehyun really was.

An Jaehyun checked his donation account once again, unable to believe his eyes.

‘1,000 dollars? Not 1,000 won but 1,000 dollars?’

There were three major ways of getting money through YouTube.

The first was through paid videos. It was the most representative way of profit.

The second was through ads. Even free videos pulled in quite a lot of money with high view count. If a video was sponsored, the profit became even bigger.

The third was through donations. Donations were sent in by the fans, and they couldn't be called insignificant. Popular YouTubers received millions or tens of millions of won just through donations.

Donations could be checked 24/7 even in Warlord. Watching donations pour in was quite fun in its own way. 1,000 won, 1 dollar, 100 yen, 1 euro... watching money flow in from various countries was undoubtedly exciting for many people. When one received a big amount like 10 or 50 dollars, he would hunt for the rest of the day feeling happy.

But today was different.

The donations had exploded. In fact, the average amount donated had increased as well. One of them was a 1,000-dollar donation. An Jaehyun couldn't sit by and continue gaming.

It was only now that An Jaehyun figured out what was happening.

“Yes!”

Before he had logged in, Skull Clown only had about 5,000 views. Now, in just 4 hours, it had reached 40,000. It was growing exponentially!

“Yes! It finally blew up!”

An Jaehyun was sure that someone from a famous Warlord fan-site had recommended the video with an introduction.

Otherwise, such an exponential growth would be hard to account for.

In truth, An Jaehyun had partially expected it. When he watched the film Romany sent him, An Jaehyun couldn't help but be impressed. At the very least, he thought he would receive 100,000 views in a couple weeks.

However, at the pace it is now, it seemed Skull Clown would pass 100,000 in less than a week.

‘100,000... that’s enough to pass the cut-line.’

There was something called a cut-line.

Past a certain point, there was a big difference in view count. Once a video passed the cut-line, it would become a “viral” video and its view count would go up steadily. IF a video couldn't pass that cut-line, it would die down just as quick.

‘Can it hit a million?’

As it is now, An Jaehyun's Skull Clown video had enough power to pass that cut-line.

Its high view count and increased number of donations was proof of it.

Plus, if Skull Clown could hit one million views, An Jaehyun would be able to get close to 10,000,000 won.

Warlord videos earned 3 won for 1 view. One million views would mean 3,000,000 won, excluding the amount one would gain from donations. Furthermore, once a video got one million views, sponsors were sure to involve themselves. This was something An Jaehyun knew by heart.

A player with 5 one-million-view videos on their belt was worth about 10,000,000 won per month. In most cases, the player wouldn't take all that money for himself. As Warlord players were part of guilds or raid-parties, at least 5 or more people took a cut of the money.

But it was different for An Jaehyun.

Just like he always wanted, everything was his to have.

'10,000,000 won for a million views.'

The light in An Jaehyun's eyes changed.

"Let's do it."



[Skin Sewing]

-Proficiency: Rank F

– You can put monster skin over your own to make your skin stronger.

[Slow Curse]

-Proficiency: Rank F

– Cast a curse that slows the enemy's speed. This curse requires more magic power and lasts for shorter time as the target's size, speed, and strength increases.

Hyrkan stared at the explanations of his two new skills. Though they were skills he had been dying to get, he didn't seem happy. In fact, he seemed quite bitter.

‘Damn it. I can't believe these two skills cost 1,900 gold... I know there is more demand than supply, but come on, it's too damn expensive! Are they messing with the price?’

1,900 gold.

Without Skull Clown seemingly about to go viral, Hyrkan would never have purchased the skills.

On the other hand, if Skull Clown really did not go viral, his investment would have huge tolls on his food. For one, meat would

be nothing but a dream. He might even have to steal coffee from a nearby office.

In any case, these two skills were quite useful for the current Hyrkan.

‘It’s not that bad I guess.’

First, Skin Sewing passively increased his defense. It was the same as Skin Armor that swordsmen learned. There was one difference, however. Skin Armor strengthened the user’s skin itself, but Skin Sewing was different. The amount of defense its user would get changed depending on the skins or scales of monsters used. This was generally a good thing, as Skin Sewing provided more defense than Skin Armor. The downside, however, was that its user would have to pay for the monsters’ skins or scales. When the user received damage, Skin Sewing would have to be renewed. It was one of the reason why necromancers were called money-eating hippos.

Slow Curse didn’t need much explanation. It was a core curse skill that all curse magicians used. It slowed its target’s movement speed, and its effectiveness was universally recognized in Warlord.

Hyrkan now had these precious skills on hand.

It was now time to put them to use.

‘I’ll make something awesome with these, and go for a Synergy

Effect.'

Skull Clown was even better than Hyrkan expected. It was only obvious to release another video at this point. With two videos working in synergy, his profit would be doubled as well.

'If I get a second million-view, I can say goodbye to my debts.'

If Hyrkan's could get a million-view video like he wanted, he could stop worrying about the money he owed. In fact, he could stop worrying about the V-Gear cost as well.

Furthermore...

'I can get some proper clothes too.'

He could say goodbye to his pitiable fashion.

This fueled Hyrkan's will even more.

★★★

"Fuck! What's wrong with you?"

Dead Woods.

In this eerie, sinister place, a player shouted in anger at two

other.

“None of your business. Blame you and your party for entering this area.”

“You bastards... do you really think you can get away with suddenly attacking us? I have everything on video!”

At that, the two players sneered.

“Whatever. You can’t see our faces anyways.”

At the same time, one of the two players made a spear of ice and threw it at the player in front of him.

Game Over.

After confirming his death, the two players stared at each other.

“Damn it. If we didn’t miss that Golden Skeleton, we wouldn’t have to do this. So Annoying!”

“Did I let it go? Why are you yelling at me? Besides, Golden Skeleton has one fucked up behavioral design.”

“Tell me about it. What kind of a monster requires you to kill it from the beginning if you can’t kill it within a time limit... because

of that, we've only been hunting players for two days."

"We have to kill it soon. We can't continue killing players to prevent the information from spreading. Tomorrow or the day after at the latest... that's all the time we have."

With that, the two went silent. Having received an order from a voice-messaging program, the two quickly turned back and ran.

Chapter 39. Golden Skeleton (2)

Skeletons hunting skeletons.

In the middle of a battlefield of a one-sided slaughter, Hyrkan sat on a rock, watching a video. In the video, one of Hyrkan's Skeleton Warrior was swinging a hammer like a baseball bat, making another skeleton's head fly out to the distance. Watching the scene, Hyrkan simply shook his head.

‘It was fun filming it, but it's pretty meh now that I look at it.’

10 days had passed since Hyrkan uploaded Skull Clown to his YouTube page.

‘The fun atmosphere isn't bad, but it's too light... but releasing two of the same battle videos...’

Skull Clown had blown up just like Hyrkan had thought. It had surpassed 100,000 views in just 4 days, and it was currently at 310,000 views.

He had earned a lot as well. His ad revenue had increased, and he received more than double his usual donation amount. Although no one had contacted him yet for a sponsorship, with his YouTube page now at 30,000 subscribers, his chances of getting a sponsor were ever increasing.

It couldn't have been any better!

However, Hyrkan was more worried than happy.

The cause of his worry was none other than the follow-up video for Skull Clown. Although he had been filming videos of himself hunting, he didn't find any of them to his liking.

Hyrkan took off his hahoe mask for a moment as he massaged his face.

‘I can't get a feel for it.’

It's not that he couldn't fight well.

In fact, his battle strength was higher than the one shown in Skull Clown.

First, thanks to Skin Sewing, Hyrkan could be a bit more daring in his battles. It was easy to tell that he was showing his aggressive side.

On the other hand, although he was stronger than he was in Skull Clown, not much had changed. It was like looking at a same car design with the only difference being the horse power. Furthermore, because the opponent was still skeletons, anything Hyrkan would make seemed to similar to Skull Clown.

‘This isn't good enough.’

Hyrkan knew the tendencies of people who enjoyed watching Warlord videos. Subscribers knew when a YouTuber released videos just to get more views. If this were revealed, their deep affection and interest quickly turned to a frightful dagger.

Hyrkan needed something new.

No matter how he fought, he would only be able to make videos of hunting skeletons in the Dead Woods.

Furthermore, Hyrkan no longer had any troubles killing skeletons and Skeleton Warriors. If the fight was close, it might be worth showing, but the current Hyrkan simply slaughtered them one-sidedly. It was to the point that Hyrkan just made his Skeleton Warriors fight by themselves as he sat back. It was one of the reason why he made a light atmosphere video like the one just now.

‘It’s a problem to fight too well.’

Hyrkan couldn’t help but be dumbfounded.

‘I can’t believe this is a problem.’

It was boring because he fought too well! He couldn’t believe it.

‘This is the best place for leveling up though...’

In the end, the solution was to change his hunting ground. He had to change his opponent.

However, for the current Hyrkan, Dead Woods was the best place to level-up. Even if there was a better place, it was too far. It would take over a day to get there, and once he did, he would have to learn the area, look for hunting points, and build his Skeleton Warrior's battle experience again. It wasn't that he was lazy, it was that it was too inefficient.

‘If I kill a little more, I can get the Skeleton Destroyer title too.’

There was a title on the line as well.

Once a player hunted certain number of skeletons, he received the ‘Skeleton Destroyer’ title. It raised magic power and stamina by 3 points each.

“Tsk.”

Hyrkan clicked his tongue. Meanwhile, his Skeleton Warriors had mercilessly beaten up the nearby skeletons to the point that they couldn't restore their body. It represented their death.

[You have leveled up.]

It was the last bit of EXP he needed for a level up. Hearing the

alert, Hyrkan smiled.

‘This is just too good.’

As always, nothing was better than a level-up alert. Hyrkan liked the current situation even more. It was a happiness only necromancers could feel.

‘I see why Rich Lich spent all that money.’

Hyrkan smiled, as he once again checked the view count and comments of Skull Clown.

‘Hm?’

What caught Hyrkan’s attention was a new comment made just now. As it was sent privately, only Hyrkan and the original commenter could see it. After reading the comment, Hyrkan’s expression changed.

‘What’s this?’



YouTube videos naturally came with comments, and among them were all sorts of weird ones. There were those that cursed incessantly, those that spammed, those that cried for no reason, those that said strange things, and even those that asked for

money.

Hyrkan was immune to these things.

Even before he got his nickname as the Hero Slaughterer, he had prepared himself for such comments. His targets had always been Rankers, those with many fans. Even when they plotted against him and paid for it, Hyrkan still received a lot of hate. There was a time that he got hate for almost anything he did.

The hate came in all forms.

Someone would randomly pour water on him while he was walking down the street, or he would be cursed at or called names for no reason.

As such, Hyrkan wasn't easily fazed by hate or cynicism.

Naturally, what made Hyrkan's expression change wasn't a hate comment or the like.

-Hello, I am a player called Bledge from England. I am writing to you as it seems you are currently hunting in the Dead Woods. I was recently PKed in the area, and I would like you to get revenge for me.

A revenge request.

It wasn't anything special. With Warlord being such a lawless place, many players sought out skilled players to get revenge for themselves.

Even so, this content of this request made Hyrkan's senses tingle.

‘A revenge request...’

In Warlord, it was quite rare to get PKed randomly. That said, Hyrkan had already been a target of PKs consecutively. It could be said that he was truly born under the stars of pushover-ness.

In any case, Hyrkan welcomed this request with arms wide open.

‘Should I go with hunting these fools?’

At a point where he needed fresh material for his next video, this request to kill PKers couldn't be better. Not to mention, he would be able to get fully-crafted items from their watches!

There was no reason for him to refuse.

Of course, if the PKers were too strong, he could simply run away. It's not like he was a hero of justice.

‘I'll see how it is.’

Hyrkan moved carefully.



When Hyrkan arrived at the spot the commenter told him about, he could luckily see the PK happening in action.

1 VS 2.

The player left alone was wearing an expression full of despair, while the other two attacked him mercilessly. The situation resolved itself quickly. There was no unnecessary sound other than the curses spurted by the victim. The offenders acted swiftly and silently like robots.

‘Hm?’

Hyrkan couldn’t help but be suspicious.

‘What’s this?’

PKers didn’t simply kill their victims. They played with them until they died. That was why they PKed in the first place. It’s not that people didn’t PK simply to take items, but that it was just extremely rare.

Even so, the PKers in front of them were clean. They moved to kill their opponents in the shortest time possible. There was no

unnecessary talk or hesitation.

‘These guys aren’t those psychos that are into PKs.’

It meant that they didn’t enjoy PKs, just that it was a mean to an end.

With his body lowered, Hyrkan watched the PKers movements more closely.

After having killed their victim, they swiftly took his watch and took off. Hyrkan could tell that they were moving with intent, meaning that they had a destination. The chances were that they had allies nearby.

Hyrkan’s senses tingled again.

‘They discovered something and they’re killing people before they find out?’

They weren’t PKing for the fun of it, but to eliminate any variable or witness.

‘It must be a Golden Skeleton.’

Hyrkan quickly arrived at a conclusion.

Golden Skeleton!

It was a boss monster that appeared in the Dead Woods, just like how Dragon Lizards spawned in the Lizard Swamp. Golden Skeletons, however, were several times more expensive than Dragon Lizards.

‘At the current market price, a Golden Skeleton’s Golden Bone should cost 5,000,000 won or more.’

Golden Skeletons were hard to kill and took 10 days to respawn. Not only that, they disappeared if one didn’t catch them within a time limit. Once it got away, the hunter would have to wait another day.

Moreover, Golden Skeleton’s Golden Bone was a crafting item used to make a level 70 Rare item. Although it wasn’t a main component, considering the cost of level 70 Rare item at this point in time, its price was justified. It was obvious why players would go to the point to PK other players.

The current situation was likely that whoever found the Golden Skeletons missed their first chance to kill the Golden Skeleton and was now PKing others to hide the information.

‘There’s no problem with me getting some then.’

It went without saying that there was no problem with Hyrkan dealing with them. Hunting them down would be considered just.

Hyrkan laughed out loud.

No matter how one put it, he was the Hero Slaughterer. Rather than hunting monsters, he enjoyed hunting players.



There were two types of guilds in Warlord.

One that played to earn money and one that played to spend money.

Blue Cat Guild.

Although they weren't well-known, with a total of 100 members, they were a guild that played to earn money. Of course, they never dealt with large amount of money. Balancing out the money they spent and money they earned, they received no more than pocket change.

The Blue Cat Guild was run in a simple way. Its members mostly did as they liked and they gathered when they needed to. Most guilds were run in this way. Not all guilds could be like the Top 30 Guilds, working like gears in a machine for a single project.

It was seven members of the Blue Cat Guild that found a Golden Skeleton while hunting in the Dead Woods.

They, of course, came to a single conclusion.

“Let’s take it for ourselves.”

Even if they reported it to the guild, they would get nothing more than chump change.

Of course, not reporting such a boss spawn to the guild was a violation of its rules. One that would get them expelled.

Even so, no one voiced any opposition at this suggestion. As with most small and medium sized guilds, players simply chose to leave guilds if they had to. Most did not think it was such a big problem.

The problem was that their first raid had failed. They spent a full day doing nothing before the Golden Skeleton appeared again. They failed on their second try as well. That’s when things began to go awry.

First and foremost, they were spiteful. They vowed that they would kill the Golden Skeleton at all cost!

At the same time, they got rid of variables that could hinder their Golden Skeleton raid. Although they were hesitant during their first PK, it was fine after that. They knew it was a bad mannered action, but they were blinded by the money.

And now it was their third time to try to hunt the Golden Skeleton.

“There’s a guy nearby hunting skeletons. What should we do?”

“Alone? Was he left behind?”

“Let’s just get rid of it. We’ve already gone this far. We might as well go all in.”

When they were bored and irritated, a perfect prey had appeared in front of them.

“Joint, it’s enough with just the two of you right?”

“Of course.”

“Hurry and come back. We’re going to have to go all in for the Golden Skeleton. We won’t get a fourth try.”

“We’ll take care of it in 3 minutes.”

Two people had begun to move to hunt down their prey.

They were the swordsman, Join, and magician, Int. Together, they were called Joint. As they were quite skilled, they were fairly well-known even before they joined the Blue Cat Guild. Now that

they had gone out, the situation was most likely taken care of. Thinking this, the remaining five players solely focused on their strategy for killing the Golden Skeleton.

On the other hand, the Joint duo tilted their head as they watched the player fight a skeleton holding a hammer.

‘That’s a skeleton I’ve never seen before.’

‘Is it a rare-type?’

Although the skeleton the player was fighting was one that they had never seen before, they didn’t think much about it. What was important to the two of them was killing the player without him even realizing what had happened.

They saw an opening, and the Joint duo rushed in.

First, the magician, Int, threw an ice grenade at the player. The ice grenade drew a parabola as it flew towards the player. When it hit the ground, countless ice shards exploded out in all directions.

“Aaak!”

The player barely dodged the ice shards as he screamed, and the swordsman, Join, closed his distance to finish him off. It was then that the player shouted out.

“What was that? What’s wrong with you!?”

The distance between Join and the player had shortened. The moment Join got in range, he swung his sword at the player without hesitation.

Whish!

The player narrowly dodged Join’s sword, causing Join to flinch.

‘This guy is no joke.’

A skilled player.

Join immediately tensed up.

Meanwhile, the player shouted at Join with a surprised look on his face.

“Are you trying to PK me? Do you know who I am? You’ll pay for it if you kill me!”

At this warning, Join only smirked.

‘Funny.’

A threat from someone who couldn’t even kill a skeleton was

laughable.

“What if I am? What are you going to do about it?”

With that, Join threw his body towards the player once again. Although the player might be skilled, Join believed that he was still advantageous. If he just bought time, Int would throw another magic spell at him. Join might even kill him off before then. What he knew for sure was that the two of them had perfect coordination. They were strong. The number of players they PKed so far was a proof of that.

Just that...

‘What am I going to do? Be thankful, that’s what.’

The player they were up against was Hyrkan who had finished his preparations.

The Joint duo was unlucky. Hyrkan had already made a trap for them.

Before Join could close the gap between himself and Hyrkan, the Skeleton Warrior threw its body at Join.

‘What!’

Join couldn’t help but to be surprised at the Skeleton Warrior

suddenly helping Hyrkan. To him, the Skeleton Warrior seemed like a monster, not a summon.

At the same time Hyrkan snapped his fingers twice, another two Skeleton Warriors that had been in hiding came out. They charged towards the magician still in the middle of casting another spell. Knowing that the opponent moved as swordsman and magician duo, Hyrkan had already made his plans.

‘Thanks for the meal.’

Hyrkan once again expressed his gratitude to Warlord for providing him with his dinner.

Chapter 40. Golden Skeleton (3)

Swordsman class players who were skilled in PKs had balanced strength and stamina stats. It was never the case that one of the two were much higher than the other. Even so, this did not mean that they distributed the stat points from level up equally. If so, down the line, they would only be suited for PKs.

Typically, players chose either the strength or stamina stat to focus most of their stat points, then filled the other stat point through items.

In the case of Join, he chose stamina with his level up stat points and strength with his item choices.

Join's current stamina stat was 149.

That was enough to determine the outcome of this match.

Crash!

Hyrkan's hammer struck Join's helmet like a bell. Join staggered, during which time Hyrkan's Skeleton Warrior struck him with its hammer. Join's body flew up in the air, then landed on the ground with a thud.

‘Shit.’

Join got up from the ground slowly. He felt his body heavier than ever before.

‘He even knows curses.’

Demon Curse and Slow Curse.

These two curses were currently hindering Join. He felt as if he was wearing shackles on both his hands and feet.

‘Who is he?’

Not to mention, the magician that was supposed to help him was long dead. When Skeleton Warriors suddenly jumped on Int, he had no way of avoiding and death was inevitable. Although magicians were strong, that was it. His magic had dealt a fair bit of damage to one of the Skeleton Warriors, but the other ones didn’t miss the opening created after his attack. It was Game Over with just one swing. Once a magician fell down, he didn’t have enough stamina to sustain being hit continuously.

At this moment, Join did not despair, but rather considered his opponent’s strength once more.

‘A necromancer with 4 skeletons. He raised strength and is also a curse magician.’

He knew his role in this situation. There was no chance of him escaping alive. His allies had already begun fighting the Golden

Skeleton. What he had to do now was to deliver as much as information as possible to his allies.

Join raised his sword.

Watching this, Hyrkan charged towards Join.

Before the distance closed, Join turned his sword horizontally to slash at Hyrkan.

Before that...

“Booster!”

He used a skill.

The moment the skill was used, Join’s sword moved with incredible speed, just like the sword had a booster attached to its hilt.

Whoosh!

Even so, Join’s sword only slashed through thin air. Hyrkan had lowered his body and dodged the attack. Immediately afterwards, Hyrkan swung his hammer at Join’s knee.

Crack!

Join's knee made a strange sound before his body spun a full circle and landed in place.

While he was staring into the sky feeling dizzy...

Crash!

A hammer slammed down his face.

Crash crash!

It rained down endlessly.



-We got taken out.

When the message from the Joint duo came, the Golden Skeleton hunting team was already in action.

They had no choice.

Their two priests had already used their buffs and their strongest magician had already finished casting his strongest spell. Most importantly, the Golden Skeleton was in front of their eyes.

Giving up and going back at this point was... something they couldn't afford to do.

In the end, two swordsmen led the way while the magician supported them from the back. Meanwhile, one of the priests talked to the already dead Joint duo using the voice talk program.

-He's not normal. Even though he's a necromancer, both he and his summons are strong. It seems we fell into his trap.

"Trap?"

-Otherwise, why would someone so strong pretend to be a weakling? The one he was fighting wasn't a monster, but his own summon.

"Mm."

Trap.

The priest wasn't surprised. He only thought what was meant to happen, happened.

'I knew this would happen.'

Dead Woods was a hunting ground for level 30+ players. Players who were above level 30 at this point in the game were people who spent a fair amount of money in the game. They weren't the kind

to sit back and do nothing when they were PKed without reason. Without a doubt they would surely try to get revenge. Because of this, PKs generally only worked at levels 10s and 20s. Past that, there was a huge risk involved. If one didn't find great joy in PKs, most opted to do PvP, a fair 1v1 dual.

Of course, there was no way the Golden Skeleton hunting team didn't know this. That was why they placed so much emphasis on ending this early. Once they finished what they wanted to do and left, there was lesser chance of receiving retaliation. Their faces weren't filmed, and they could simply change what they were wearing. It's not like there were security cameras or finger print scanners.

However, it seemed that one of their victims had a strong backing. They didn't think someone so skilled would come in such short period of time.

“Are you sure it was just one person?”

-Just one. No one else.

“One person...”

On the other hand, it seemed that the victim could only find one person in such short amount of time.

This fact made the priest unsure.

‘If it’s just one, maybe we can deal with him.’

If a group of players came, they would have no choice but to run away. But with just one, it was a different story.

Of course, Join’s thoughts were different.

-I’m telling you, he’s not normal. You guys should take care of him first before you get to the Golden Skeleton.

The priest refused Join’s suggestion.

“If we miss the Golden Skeleton today, we’ll have to try again tomorrow. By that time, there will be more people after us.”

If they wanted to kill the Golden Skeleton, now was the time. They had delayed it long enough. Any more would be too risky.

-But...

Join knew this as well.

“Just tell me how he looks like again.”

-Alright.

Join decided not to continue with his suggestion. He was already

in Game Over state, and he had no choice but to hope for his allies to succeed.

Everyone else agreed as well.

“If we’re going to do it, we have to do it now.”

“You said it was just one, right? Even if he comes here, I’ll just take the aggro, and everyone else can pounce on him. It won’t take long.”

“Yeah, let’s hurry up and finish.”

They knew that if they couldn’t kill it today, it was better to leave Dead Woods.

The Golden Skeleton hunt started in such a way and went on as if the two missing people weren’t needed.

All members were at their maximum concentration, and they were already experienced in dealing with the Golden Skeleton. Because of it, they were able to coordinate well with each other.

Above all, the one they had been wary of never came. Not even skeletons and Skeleton Warriors, which often arrived after hearing the commotion, showed up. The Golden Skeleton hunting team could put all their energy and focus onto the Golden Skeleton.

As a result...

“Get ready to chase!”

“It’s phase 2!”

They were quickly able to lower the Golden Skeleton’s HP to half.

Once the Golden Skeleton’s HP dropped to half, the Golden Skeleton dropped aggro and ran away as fast as possible.

“Catch it!”

“Don’t let it escape this time!”

This was why it was so hard to hunt a Golden Skeleton. If the Golden Skeleton went out of vision, the game system decided that it had successfully escaped. In that case, the hunters would have to wait another day.

The Golden Skeleton hunting team had already failed two times. They didn’t want to fail a third time. Experienced from its last two escapes, they didn’t blindly chase after it. They set up a formation and moved accordingly.

Swordsmen, magicians, and priests all took part in the chase.

The five moved as one.

And...

‘It’s finally starting. They did better than I thought they would.’

Hyrkan, who had been hiding and watching, made his move.



“I’m here to get an apology.”

When the Golden Skeleton hunting team successfully caught up with the Golden Skeleton, they couldn’t help but yell in excitement.

Once the pursuers caught up with the Golden Skeleton, it stopped running and fought back. At this point, finishing it off wasn’t too big of a problem.

However, a strange player suddenly appeared in a strange getup, wearing a strange mask, while saying strange things. The Golden Skeleton hunting team stood dumbfounded.

“What?”

They had already received a report.

The Joint duo told them about Hyrkan's characteristics, and they weren't the ones to be forgotten so easily either. They had even made a plan to remove him if he appeared.

Even so, they couldn't help but be shocked by the absurd thing Hyrkan was saying.

Hyrkan repeated his words at the two priests standing in the back.

"Your acts of bad manner have not gone unnoticed. Countless players have been PKed by you already. I'm here to get an apology."

He continued.

"I'm not here to cause a ruckus. All I want is an apology, a sincere one. I also want you to return the watches of all the players you PKed. That is all."

Hyrkan's polite and composed words were undoubtedly just. Since they PKed, he wanted them to apologize and to return the watches! There was nothing unfair about it.

However, for the ones hearing it...

'The fuck is he saying?'

‘Is he messing with us?’

It was complete nonsense.

It was so absurd that their faces were frozen in stupefaction.

When Hyrkan finished his speech, everyone snapped back. They opened their mouths to prepare for action.

“How long can you last alone?”

“I’ll be fine for 2 or 3 minutes.”

“Good luck.”

“Hurry up and come back in 3 minutes. That guy’s nuts.”

To fight, a swordsman had to lead. Although he was alone, he was a necromancer who had skeletons at his disposal. They couldn’t just fight him with magicians and priests.

As such, one of the swordsman fighting the Golden Skeleton turned back to face Hyrkan.

At the same time, the other swordsman attacked the Golden Skeleton to draw aggro to himself.

The swordsman raised his sword up high and charged at the Golden Skeleton.

“Crash!”

When the swordsman yelled out, his sword lit up.

Shining Sword.

The Golden Skeleton swung its own sword towards this sword, and the two swords clashed.

Crash!

Rather than the sound of metal, a sound of explosion rang out.

In the midst of that explosion, the Golden Skeleton was clearly eyeing the swordsman.

“I got the aggro!”

Having succeeded in drawing the aggro, the swordsman shouted out. Meanwhile, the two priests quickly ran back, away from Hyrkan. It was the most basic of basics to aim for the priests first.

At the same time, the swordsman that had turned back stood

between Hyrkan and the two priests. He immediately swung his sword at Hyrkan. Horizontally, vertically, diagonally... he slashed at him without any delay.

Whoosh, whoosh!

The sound of air being cut continued to ring out in Hyrkan's ears.

“Alright, just buy time. I'll send a hot one flying over soon.”

The magician, of course, began casting his magic. It wasn't a strong one, but one that could be casted quickly. If need be, he would risk losing the swordsman to finish Hyrkan off. After all, they were up against just one person, and the Golden Skeleton hunting team had two priests.

At this, Hyrkan gave one final warning.

“I just need an apology. If you do this, I will have no choice but to retaliate.”

Of course, there was no response to his warning. There was no need to.

At the same time...

‘How is this guy dodging so well?’

The swordsman couldn't help but be surprised as he watched Hyrkan dodge all his attacks with the slightest movement. He could even afford to blabber.

“I'm ready.”

Hearing the magician's report, the swordsman looked for a timing.

“Booster!”

Then, he used an attack speed boosting skill.

Whish!

The heavy sound of the sword quickly turned sharp. At the same time, the magician grabbed a hold of a heavy fireball. He estimated the distance between them as he prepared to throw.

At that moment...

Clack, clack!

A horned Skeleton Warrior wearing Bone Armor began to charge towards the magician like a bull.

Watching this, one of the priests quickly arrived next to the

magician and held his palms out.

“Light Shield!”

A tent-sized barrier surrounded him and the magician. The Skeleton Warrior swung its hammer toward the shield.

At the same time...

Whish!

The magician threw his fireball at his ally and Hyrkan without hesitation. The fireball made a perfect parabola as it began to fall toward Hyrkan’s back. Then...

Boom!

The fireball exploded and fire shards exploded out in all directions.

“Shit!”

A scream was heard.

“Help me!”

“What?”

“What happened?”

The sound came from the swordsman who had been keeping the Golden Skeleton’s aggro.

Chapter 41. Golden Skeleton (4)

Translator's note: BM means bad manner. It's used as a verb in the gaming community, and it literally means to do bad mannered acts.

Hyrkan's plan was to make the Golden Skeleton hunting team reluctant to continue or to stop their hunt. If they did continue, they would surely make one of them face the Golden Skeleton while the rest fought against him.

Hyrkan's target was the one person left to aggro the Golden Skeleton.

He placed two Skeleton Warriors and a Skeleton Magician on the east side in their defense mode. Hyrkan himself prepared to cause a ruckus on the west side along with another Skeleton Warrior. It was literally threatening the east while striking the west*.

[T/N: Korean idiom derived from Chinese (聲東擊西)].

The battle had begun when Hyrkan snapped his fingers twice.

While Hyrkan distracted the four members of the Golden Skeleton hunting team, his two Skeleton Warriors and a Skeleton Magician charged towards the swordsman facing the Golden Skeleton.

The starting signal was the Fireboom used by the Skeleton Magician. Fireboom exploded between the Golden Skeleton and

the swordsman, and the two Skeleton Warriors quickly attacked the swordsman's helmet and side with their hammers.

Although the two Skeleton Warrior's attacks weren't light, the final blow was dealt by the Golden Skeleton. With its height of 4 meters, it swung its long arms holding its long sword like a whip.

Crack!

The thick shoulder pad on their swordsman's left shoulder broke apart like a piece of paper. The armor was crushed, and the Golden Skeleton's attack seemed powerful enough to sever the man's arm.

“Shit!”

The swordsman momentarily felt a shocking pain on his shoulder. In Warlord, such level of pain signified a severe amount of damage.

“Help me!”

That was only the start. As a boss monster, the Golden Skeleton didn't overlook his opponent's weakness, and it swung its sword continuously. Unable to use his left shoulder, the swordsman was not able to hold up his shield. As a result, he had to endure five of Golden Skeleton's attacks with his armor and helmet. Endure was a nice way of putting it, as he was simply beaten up.

Plus.

Bang, bang!

As if to irritate him, the Skeleton Warriors beat on the swordsman's armor with their hammers, not giving him a chance to balance himself. Once he began to be bombarded, he was unable to control the situation anymore.

He was in a critical situation.

However, his allies weren't in any position to help him.

"We're screwed!"

"Should I cancel the shield?"

Currently, two priests and a magician stood inside a level 30 barrier magic. A total of 3 people.

Plus, their shield...

Bang, bang, bang!

Was being bombarded by a Skeleton Warrior under a Madness Helm effect. The Skeleton Warrior swung his hammer to a beat, as if to use the shield and hammer as instruments.

In such a situation, the only way of going outside the shield was to cancel the shield magic. As long as the shield magic was being maintained, the only thing that could go through the shield were magic spells and skills.

However, the magician was currently casting a new spell. If the shield was canceled... at least one of them would be killed by the Skeleton Warrior.

The three trapped inside the shield were unable to come to a decision.

Meanwhile, Hyrkan moved on to his next act.

‘So far so good.’

Hyrkan had planned up to the current situation. He knew that it would be hard to win against them by himself. After all, they were strong enough to put food on their dinner table. Even now, Hyrkan was under a fair amount of damage. The magic thrown by the magician was fantastic. Throwing magic behind a player and exploding it sounded easy on paper, but it was hard to do without experience. Although Bone Armor and lowering his posture helped reduce the damage, it was still a significant damage. Close to half of his HP had disappeared.

The state of his magic power was even worse.

He had summoned three Skeleton Warriors and one Skeleton

Magician. One of them was under Madness Helm and he had used Bone Armor on himself. His Skeleton Magician used magic as well.

In truth, he didn't have any magic power left to try anything.

Hyrkan looked straight ahead. The swordsman in front of him looked as if he didn't understand the situation, as he only stood in alert without attacking him.

At this, Hyrkan turned his back on him.

Then...

'Time to run.'

He ran with all his might.



The moment Hyrkan ran away, his skeletons that had been fighting with all their might suddenly turned and followed suit.

Watching this scene, the four players were simply speechless.

'What?'

The whole situation was so bizarre that they couldn't utter a

sound.

Meanwhile...

“HELP ME I SAID!”

The swordsman fighting the Golden Skeleton used what little strength he had left to scream for help.

It was then that the four players snapped back to reality.

“Cancel Shield!”

When the cracked shield disappeared, the magician quickly ran towards the Golden Skeleton. Once the distance was closed to a certain extent, he stopped. He immediately threw the fireball in his hand at the Golden Skeleton. The fireball turned into a gigantic fire arrow mid-air before it pierced the Golden Skeleton’s head.

The Golden Skeleton turned his head and stared at the magician. With its head burned with a arrow stuck inside, the sight was terrifying to behold.

At the same time, the swordsman that had been fighting Hyrkan ran toward the Golden Skeleton. The two priests moved as well.

The priests each stuck to a swordsman.

“Save Kang first! I’ll buy time!”

Before they could decide on whether to run away or to continue fighting, they needed to first catch some breaths. Moreover, although it was hard to chase the Golden Skeleton, it was equally hard to escape from it. Even if they planned on running, they needed to make careful preparations beforehand.

It took them five minutes to get into their formation again.

The priests used Healing until their magic power ran out, and the magician and the swordsmen fired their skills and magic to buy that time. Thankfully, no one had died.

“I thought I’d die. Did you know? My HP fell to a single digit.”

A player that barely survived death thanks to the priests’ heals took a breath.

“What do we do now? Fight? Or run?”

“What about that psycho? Won’t he come back?”

While the Golden Skeleton hunting team was discussing their next plan and fighting...

“I’m here to get an apology.”

Hyrkan reappeared.

This time, he was alone. He came alone wearing just his Bone Armor. Even that looked ridiculous. A Snapback hat, Bone Armor, and hahoe mask... no matter how one looked at it, it was a weird combination.

If they saw such a getup at a castle, they would surely have bursted out into laughter.

However, such an appearance in a battlefield was... eerie, to say the least.

‘What’s wrong with this guy?’

Having seen Hyrkan, the five players felt goose bumps rather than rage.

It wasn’t uncommon for someone to disturb a boss monster raid. It was especially true in cases like this when the raid wasn’t announced beforehand and the raiders PKed nearby players.

Even so, what was happening now was the first of its kind. What Hyrkan was doing was undoubtedly cruel. Of course, it would have been funny for anyone watching. If this situation was being broadcasted live, the chat would surely be spammed with laughter.

However, it only provoked swearing from the ones on the receiving end.

Above all, Hyrkan was strong. His Skeleton Warriors were incomparable to the skeletons at Dead Woods. Not to mention, he had a Skeleton Magician!

As such...

“You fucker! Do you even know who we are? Hm?”

The response could only be emotional.

“Hey!”

“Ah...”

“Are you out of your mind?”

“S-Sorry.”

When a priest bursted out in anger, the magician shushed him with his words.

Do you know who we are?

It was perhaps the most used phrase in Warlord. In a world where everyone moved in guild or party units, flaunting one's background known was only natural.

The problem was with the current situation.

The five people here and the two dead players schemed to take the Golden Skeleton for themselves. If what they were doing were known by their guild, they would surely be punished and have their belongings taken by the guild.

Flaunting their guild?

Stupid.

Thankfully, they stopped just in time.

However...

“Ah, so you guys are in a guild. Please tell me the guild’s name. I will request an apology from them officially.”

There was no way Hyrkan would let this opportunity pass. Hyrkan’s words sent chills down the spines of the five players.

‘We’re screwed if he finds out.’

If Hyrkan found out and told their guild about what they did, they could only imagine the consequence.

At this point, their minds had already stopped functioning. It was impossible for them to make sound decisions. If they could, they wouldn't have done this in the first place.

“Let's just kill him.”

“Yeah, let's just give up on everything and kill him.”

At any other time, they would have dropped whatever they were doing to kill Hyrkan.

However...

“Calm down. The Golden Skeleton's HP is at 30% now.”

The Golden Skeleton in front of their eyes made it hard to do so.

They saved their ally and fought until they could reorganize their formation. The magician had fired his magic continuously and the swordsmen continued to deal damage to it. The HP they shaved off the Golden Skeleton wasn't small in the slightest.

Now, it only had one third of it left.

They knew they were almost at the finish line.

Not only that, but the Golden Skeleton was also incomparably

more valuable than other boss monsters.

‘Golden Bone...’

‘If it dropped a crafting jewel, it would be even better.’

They would get at least 5,000,000 won. It wasn’t a small sum at all. Just two decades ago, if someone said he would be able to make 5 million won by killing a single monster, everyone would have called him crazy. Not to mention, 5 million was the minimum. There was a chance it might drop crafting jewels. In that case, they would be able to earn even more. 10 million wouldn’t be impossible, meaning each person was guaranteed more than a million won.

Giving up?

“If he comes at us again, we’ll do what we did last time. One person just has to hold the aggro, while everyone else goes after him. He’s by himself anyways.”

Impossible.

Plus, as long as Hyrkan wasn’t plastered with Unique items, there was a definite limit to his magic power. The reason necromancers weren’t popular was that there was a clear limit to their potential.

They wouldn’t be caught off guard this time either.

They knew what they were up against.

“Either fuck off or come at us!”

One of the priests took lead to provoke Hyrkan. Hearing this, Hyrkan turned tail. Then, he disappeared. When he did, the five players sighed in relief.

‘So it really is impossible by yourself.’

‘Please don’t come back.’

They wished for Hyrkan to give up and run.

Unfortunately, their wish did not come true. 3 minutes. In exactly 3 minutes, Hyrkan reappeared. He came with skeletons, but this time, they weren’t his own.

“I don’t need an apology anymore.”

Hyrkan had brought 3 Skeletons and a Skeleton Warrior from nearby.

Then, chaos ensued.



When 3 Skeletons, 1 Skeleton Warrior, and 1 psycho entered the fight, the battle became a complete mess. In this mess, the first to die was, of course, the priest.

A Skeleton Warrior continuously hacked away at one of the priests' health. He left with one final word.

“FUCK!”

It was a word to describe everything that had happened to him today.

The moment he died, the outcome of the fight was determined. One priest wasn't enough to support two swordsmen and a magician. In the end, the remaining priest chose to enclose himself and the magician in shield magic. It was the only thing he could do in such situation. Now, although he could support the magician, it was impossible to support the two swordsmen.

The swordsmen weren't in any better shape. The priests' buffs had already ended, and one of them had his armor heavily damaged by the Golden Skeleton. It was impossible for a half-broken swordsman to hold his ground without a priest.

Everything collapsed one by one.

When one of the swordsmen was killed by a Skeleton Warrior, the remaining three stopped thinking.

It was over.

“Run!”

“Damn it...”

A priest, a swordsman, and a magician.

They all escaped in different directions. The one remaining Skeleton, the Skeleton Warrior, and the Golden Skeleton did not stand by. The Skeleton chased after the magician and the Skeleton Warrior chased after the priest.

At the same time...

Bang!

Hyrkan's hammer struck the helmet of the swordsman that was fending off the Golden Skeleton.

“You fucker!”

The swordsman naturally cursed.

Hyrkan did not stop to reply, and quickly moved on to his next action. After hitting the swordsman's helmet to make him lose

balance, he swiped down at his leg to make him fall. Then, he moved backwards by five steps.

Then, as if it had been waiting for it the entire time, the Golden Skeleton slashed its gigantic sword down at the fallen swordsman.

Crack!

In an instant, its gigantic sword severed the swordsman's body in half.

He was dead without doubt.

The Golden Skeleton's aggro then naturally moved to Hyrkan.

“Waow.”

Watching the light in the Golden Skeleton's eyes, Hyrkan made the biggest smile he possibly could.

‘I didn't think it'd go this well.’

With that, Hyrkan snapped his fingers twice and charged towards the Golden Skeleton.



Hahoe Mask Hyrkan, who had gained a fair amount of fame through Skull Clown, had released another YouTube video. Subscribers excited by his last video rushed to Hyrkan's YouTube page and started the video.

Its title, The Avenger.

-Is it another video of him fighting?

-Is he fighting against skeletons again? That's a bit boring.

Its title suggested that it would be another tense, thrilling battle video.

However, its content was completely different from expectations. The video started with a YouTube comment. After showing the comment requesting revenge, Hahoe Mask Hyrkan spoke.

"I'm not a kind person, but for the sake of my fan, I will do my best to punish the BM players."

That's how the video started.

- This guy's hilarious. I thought he was just good at fighting. What a mad man.

- "I'm here to get an apology," he says. LOL

- He brought monsters over the third time! Amazing. I should try it sometime.

It was comedy.

He requested an apology from the BMers, then using himself as bait, he attacked a player in the back. Then, he asked for an apology again, and when it didn't work, he brought monsters over.

- I love this guy. This is better than just seeing him fight.
- I watched the whole 10 minutes from beginning to end!
- So he's this kind of guy. I like him even more now.
- It's been a while since I last found someone to watch.

The Hyrkan in the video wasn't the terrifying master of battle he has last shown himself to be, but a jester.

- Isn't it too harsh?
- It's a little hard to watch. He's too sly.
- Yeah, I'm disappointed.

For some, Hyrkan's actions were too excessive.

- I got PKed while hunting there too. This makes me feel satisfied.
- I'm the one who commented. Thanks for taking revenge.
- What's the problem? They're PKers anyways. It's not like he cheated or exploited a bug.
- Yeah, BMers deserve to die.

However, no one criticized Hyrkan's revenge against the ones who BMed.

– I mean, he fought seven people by himself. If this is too sly, then what should he have done?

Most importantly, Hyrkan carried out revenge against seven players all by himself. Although there were many videos of players avenging others, it was hard to find one person taking on several.

In fact, the small argument in the comments increased the view count, and The Avenger video hit 20,000 views in a day. The view count rose much quicker than Skull Clown's, and donations came in similar to Skull Clown's.

It wouldn't be strange for An Jaehyun to be dancing in happiness.

However, An Jaehyun was not dancing like he normally would. With glasses and a serious expression on his face, he was furiously typing on the tablet PC like a calculator.

‘With the donation, the money I got from selling the watches, the money from the Golden Skeleton, and the amount I collected so far...’

With his calculations finished, An Jaehyun took off his glasses and let out a sigh.

‘It’s enough to clear my debt.’

It was at that moment when one of the shackles on AnJaehyun’s feet disappeared.

Chapter 42. Searching For Migi (1)

“The original 10,000,000 won plus interest. Payment has been confirmed.”

At the private moneylender, Park Wuyoung’s words, An Jaehyun turned his gaze towards him. Although it was a mysterious gaze, Park Wuyoung seemed to have figured out what he was thinking, and he smiled lightly.

“Are you suspicious because the trade ended so cleanly?”

“Well...”

An Jaehyun turned around and avoided his eyes. Although he didn’t like the fact that his thoughts were read, it was exactly as Park Wuyoung said. An Jaehyun found it hard to believe that the private loan contract had ended like some bank transfer. That was what private loans meant to ordinary people.

An Jaehyun was expecting them to play tricks on him or ask for more money. He had even walked in after preparing himself for any schemes to come.

Park Wuyoung was quite used to attitude similar to An Jaehyun’s.

“This isn’t a job you can survive in by being nice, but it’s also not a place that tries to screw over customers who pay their dues on

time.”

‘I didn’t think you’d be able to do it though.’

Park Wuyoung was interested in something else.

When An Jaehyun first came in to borrow money, Park Wuyoung was sure that he would come begging on his knees to save him. Of course, Park Wuyoung had no intention of doing so. Be it selling his body or taking his room An Jaehyun signed as guarantee, he planned to get his money’s worth.

However, An Jaehyun paid back the money much earlier than it was due.

That’s what caught Park Wuyoung’s attention. As such, he stealthily changed the conversation topic.

“I know Warlord makes money, but you must be quite skilled to earn so much in such a short period of time.”

An Jaehyun did not answer the question. Instead, he asked his own.

“Can I get up now?”

Park Wuyoung also did not answer, and said what he wanted to say. He took out his wallet and gave An Jaehyun his business card.

An Jaehyun stared fixedly at the business card.

“I’ll keep it short. If you’re troubled by conversion fees or taxes, feel free to contact me. I’ll take care of it for a much more reasonable price.”

Only then did An Jaehyun take the business card.

‘Does he think I’m some pushover?’

Even as he took the business card, An Jaehyun sneered on the inside.

He didn’t come see Park Wuyoung without doing his research. Although many private loaners used V-Gears for their business, not all private loaners earned their money this way.

Before returning to the past, An Jaehyun worked at a Warlord workshop, and he saw the workshop owner talking with Park Wuyoung multiple times. At the same time that he was a private loaner, Park Wuyoung also made money from illegal VR game money conversion or trade.

It wasn’t a particularly spectacular business.

To change in-game currency to money, a conversion fee had to be paid. As income tax also applied to money earned from games, many people looked for ways to decrease the conversion fee and tax rate.

Of course, An Jaehyun had no intention to do business with Park Wuyoung.

It was obvious.

A kind private moneylender? Maybe such a thing was possible, but Park Wuyoung certainly wasn't one.

This was a trap. Once An Jaehyun did business with Park Wuyoung to lower the conversion fee or income tax, Park Wuyoung would hold An Jaehyun's weakness. It was clear what would happen to those whose weaknesses were held by private moneylenders.

An Jaehyun got up from his seat.

"I'll contact you if I have the chance."

Those were An Jaehyun's last words to Park Wuyoung.



Thwack!

With an intense sound of a watermelon breaking, a Skeleton's head fastballed towards Hyrkan.

“Whoop.”

After narrowly catching the Skeleton’s head, Hyrkan made a sour face.

“Hey, hey, go easy. Don’t send heads flying everywhere.”

Hyrkan put the Skeleton’s head under his arm and began beating it with his hammer. Meanwhile, his Skeleton Warriors raised their hammers high, then slammed it down at the Skeleton on the ground.

It was terrifying to see up close, but ridiculous if seen afar. Of course, it was a typical scene for Hyrkan. As such, he was expressionless.

‘I can’t do this anymore.’

Hyrkan was currently level 39. Furthermore, he only had 11 percent EXP left to go until level 40.

From level 30 to level 40, he only hunted Skeletons and Skeleton Warriors. The number of Skeletons he had hunted was well over a thousand by now. He had obtained skeleton-related titles long ago. Rather than to say he was hunting skeletons, it was now better to say he was a skeleton-dismantling machine.

Of course, the result was more than satisfactory. Even Hyrkan was surprised by his level up speed. His profit wasn't small either. Although Skeletons didn't particularly give a lot of money, every little bit accumulated to a rather large sum.

However, his happy feeling did not last long.

‘So what if I have money? Level 40 items are too much of a luxury.’

If he could, he would have sold his current items and bought the best level 40 Rare items using the money he had saved up. However, he had another place to use the 3000 gold and donation money he had.

With the donation money, he had to pay next month's V-Gear installment fee and Warlord user fee. As for his 3000 gold, he had to buy Magic Power Switching Set, a core uniform for level 30+ magicians.

That was how bad Hyrkan's current magic power was. Once he became level 40 and learned Golem Summon, he would have even less magic power. He couldn't throw away Golem Summon either. Golems changed the entire battle paradigm of necromancers. The existence of a solid tanker was a godsend compared to the brittle skeletons.

In any case, what Hyrkan was doing was nothing short of amazing. Normally, it was impossible to get all the items one needed using the money earned through gameplay. Most players

spent their own money to buy things.

Even so, the only thing Hyrkan could feel was sadness on the fact that all the money he earned had disappeared into thin air. It was only natural for him to be bitter about it.

“Tsk!”

After clicking his tongue shortly, Hyrkan angrily chucked the skeleton head he had been holding.

Hyrkan’s Skeleton Warriors ran after the skeleton head like a dog with a new toy ball, then began hammering down at the skeleton head. Watching this, Hyrkan let out a light sigh.

‘Never mind beef. Looks like I won’t even eat pork for a while.’

An unspeakable hunger.

The only thing that could satiate his hunger was Ahimbree, waiting at the Bangtz’s Castle for him to hit level 40.



When Hyrkan walked into Ahimbree’s office, Ahimbree drew a symbol in the air instead of speaking. Immediately after the symbol was completed, a book flew up from the pile of books spread out like trash heap. Then, it fluttered towards Hyrkan like a

butterfly.

It was his reward.

According to Ahimbree's Teachings (2), Hyrkan would receive 2 rewards upon hitting level 40.

A skillbook and Pursuer of Corruption Ring.

Clearly, the book flying in front of him was his skillbook. Hyrkan quickly snatched the book from the air, then silently read its title.

'Skeleton Science.'

Hyrkan doubted his eyes.

'No way.'

Hyrkan read the title once again. Just like he thought, it was Skeleton Science.

Hyrkan's expression stiffened up.

'No freaking way.'

Skeleton Science.

It was one of the most desired skill for necromancers using Skeleton Summoning. Although it was only a Rare rank skill, its effectiveness easily made it a Unique rank skill.

Its effect was simple. It was a passive skill that raised the stats of all skeletons, while decreasing the amount of magic power used.

‘It’s not impossible to obtain one... but I didn’t think I’d get it here.’

Hyrkan had learned about this skill from Helgen. When Helgen was explaining good skills for necromancers to have, he gave Skeleton Science 4 stars out of 5. At the same time, he said the reason he was able to stand out among all the necromancers was because he was lucky enough to obtain Skeleton Science. After that, he said to pay for information to obtain Skeleton Science.

‘First Madness Helm, now this. As expected of one of the seven disciples of the Great Sage. Everything he gives is fantastic.’

It was above his expectation.

It was a skill he had to obtain one day. Although it was a skill he could obtain if he had the money, he didn’t think he would get it here as a quest reward.

There was more.

“Come on over.”

Ahimbree called Hyrkan over to his desk. Hyrkan quickly rushed to his desk, after which Ahimbree took something out from his desk drawer.

A ring.

It was a plain ring that had a rock where a jewel should have been.

‘So this is the Pursuer of Corruption Ring.’

Pursuer of Corruption Ring.

Although he didn’t know its specific effects, he knew it had to be similar to the Pursuer of Corruption Necklace he had. Although necklaces usually had better options than rings, it would still be a fantastic Chronical Unique nonetheless.

Above all, it wasn’t easy to get accessories at this point in the game.

“This ring was made using the Corrupted Stone you brought. It’s a ring that uses the Corrupted One’s powers. Since you brought the stone, you have the right to own this ring.”

At this, Hyrkan was all smiles on the inside.

‘After what I went through to get that stone, of course.’

Hyrkan naturally reached out for the ring. He wanted to put it on his finger as soon as possible.

Then.

Swish!

Ahimbree grabbed a hold of Hyrkan’s hand reaching out for the ring. Hyrkan’s froze.

The hell?

Hyrkan asked with his facial expression, and Ahimbree answered immediately as if he had read his face.

“You have the right to own this ring, but it comes with a responsibility.”

“I will do anything.”

Hyrkan answered without hesitation. Currently, he was ready to jump into a pit of fire if Ahimbree told him to. That was how happy he was.

“I lost contact with an agent named Migi who was pursuing the root of corruption. His last report came from Churu Castle. Go there and search for him. Then, you will have to finish his mission.”

[You obtained the quest, ‘Searching for Migi.’]

Hyrkan had no reason to refuse Ahimbree’s quest.

“Sure, sure.”

‘I can even tell you who the Corrupt Count is. What’s to finding a person!’

The moment Hyrkan answered, Ahimbree moved his hand and Hyrkan quickly took the ring in his hand.

‘It’s... my... precious.’

Hyrkan’s face as he put the ring on his finger was exactly like that of Gollum from Lord of the Rings.

Chapter 43. Searching For Migi (2)

[Pursuer of Corruption Ring]

*Main properties

- Unique-rank Item
- Increases class-specific stats proportional to level
- All stats +9
- Required level: None
- Required title: Title ‘Pursuer of Corruption’

*Sub-properties

- All stats +21 when equipped with the Pursuer of Corruption Necklace
- This item becomes bound to its owner.

After receiving the Pursuer of Corruption Ring from Ahimbree, the biggest smile hung on Hyrkan’s mouth. If one did not know any better, he would think Hyrkan had gone mad.

‘It’s untradeable, but it’s still a Chronical Unique accessory. A set item too!’

Just the additional magic power he gained was 50 points. He got 30 points from the item itself and its set effects. The other 20 came from the class-specific stat boost, which was half of whatever level he was. Once he buys the Magic Power Switching set, he would be able to get at least another 50 points.

In total, he would get close to 100 points of magic power in one

day. Since he received 6% stat boost from the Rising Star and Ahimbree's Disciple titles, it would be 106 points.

‘If I add Skeleton Science on top of this...’

Hyrkan set aside his ring and checked the new skill he acquired.

[Skeleton Science]

- Proficiency: Rank F
- Increases the stats of all skeletons by 5%.
- Decreases the amount of magic power needed to summon skeletons by 10%.
- Decreases the amount of magic power needed to maintain skeletons by 10%.
- Increases the number of summonable skeletons by 1.

‘This is more than enough.’

With more than 100 points of magic power and the effect of Skeleton Science, he would have no problems using his skeletons.

The spare magic power would then lead to more power.

‘Next is....’

Golems.



It was 3 meters tall.

With a clay gorilla-like appearance, the Golem wasn't so visually appealing. However, if one personally felt the sense of comfort looking at its broad back, then he would know why Golems were called the flower of necromancers.

It was the same for Hyrkan.

‘Fantastic.’

After learning Golem Summoning at the Class Tower, he immediately headed to a desolate hunting ground to summon it. Even though he had full magic power at start, he only had three quarters left after summoning the Golem. Although Hyrkan had yet to buy the Magic Power Switching set, considering the sizable boost in his magic power due to the Pursuer of Corruption Ring, Hyrkan could understand why Golem Summoning was called a magic power-eating hippo.

Even so, Hyrkan didn't feel bad in the slightest. He knew that his Golem would be his life-long partner, one that would spare no cost to protect him.

‘I can finally do some proper battles.’

The role of a tank was that important.

Furthermore, a Golem's tanking ability was higher than what most players would expect.

Although no one should have learned it at this point in time, there were Golem-related passive skills that gave elemental properties to Golems. By using them, necromancers could change their Golems' properties so that they received the least amount of damage from the monsters they were facing. As other tankers spent huge sum of money to acquire armor sets resistant to different elements, one could see how convenient Golems were.

Besides their tanking ability, Golems had two more fantastic features.

First was its travel mode. Necromancers could travel while riding on its back. When moving from one castle to another, as long as the necromancer had visited both places before, an automatic navigation system would activate. Currently in Warlord, players didn't have much means of transportation. As such, it was a feature that brought envy from other classes.

The second feature was its copy mode. Copy mode made the Golem copy the movement of its master.

‘I always wanted to try it.’

It was the mode Hyrkan was most excited for.

A movie Hyrkan had seen long time ago, Real Steel starring Hugh Jackman. It was a movie that featured a bulky robot boxing other robots. In that movie, there was a scene where the robot was copying the main character's moves.

Watching the scene, Hyrkan had once dreamed that the same thing would happen to him. Unfortunately, the era of virtual reality arrived before the era of boxing robots.

“Copy mode.”

With Hyrkan's command, the Golem moved and copied Hyrkan's stance. When Hyrkan shook his head side to side, the Golem shook its head side to side. When Hyrkan raised his arms up, the Golem raised its arms up. When Hyrkan made a fist, so did the Golem.

Then.

Whish!

Hyrkan threw out a jab.

Whoosh!

The Golem did so as well.

Full of expectations, Hyrkan's face stiffened slightly. Then, he threw a few punches consecutively.

Jab, jab, straight!

Although the Golem copied Hyrkan and threw out punches, its tempo was clearly off. In other words, it was rather slow.

‘It’s slower and stiffer than I thought.’

Although Hyrkan hadn’t expected it to throw out punches and move its body like the robot from the movie, but the Golem’s movements were below his expectation.

‘It’s my fault for being too greedy.’

Hyrkan put his arms down and shook his head side to side.

The Golem put his arms down and shook its head side to side as well. Watching this, Hyrkan couldn’t help but laugh.

In truth, he was not disappointed. Copy mode wasn’t there to be used offensively in the first place. The real value of copy mode was in suppressing the enemy. Clinching the enemy or tackling the enemy was enough for Golems to do in battle.

“End copy mode.”

With Hyrkan’s command, the Golem went back to its drooped position. Hyrkan stepped on its body and sat on its shoulder. Now,

it was time to check how comfortable it was.

“Travel mode. Destination, Bangtz Castle.”

At Hyrkan’s command, the Golem marched ahead. Exactly 3 minutes afterwards...

“Well, shit.”

Hyrkan unsummoned his Golem and yelled out angrily.

“How is this a Golem? It’s a fucking turtle!”



Thanks to virtual reality, people were able to meet in virtual worlds whenever they wanted. The five people currently in a meeting were able to meet thanks to this fact.

There were five people sitting around a properly sized round table. One was an old man, one was a young woman, one was a young man, one was a middle aged man, and one was a young lady with a small frame.

Although they seemed completely different on the surface, there was something they all had in common.

It was that they played Warlord, that they were members of the Top 30 Guilds, that they were all in top 100 Rankers, and that they were leaders of their respective guilds.

“Five people, what a surprise.”

The guild masters of some of Warlord’s Top 30 Guilds had gathered in a single place.

It was a rare sight, to say the least.

The Top 30 Guilds were competitors. To steal as many viewers as possible and to increase their broadcast ratings as much as possible, they had to do whatever means necessary.

Although there were cases where two or three guilds collaborated, it was extremely rare for five people to gather at a single place.

It was also more dangerous than ever. If other guilds found out, they would become suspicious of the five guilds and hold another meeting to discuss it. Once that happened, an incident was bound to happen.

“We’re all busy people. Let’s skip the introduction and go right into the main subject.”

As everyone present knew this fact, they didn’t try to ruin the atmosphere with needless jokes.

They were short and to the point.

“As you may all know, it seems that Hydra Guild has found out the identity of the Corrupt Count.”

The reason for the meeting was this.

“Although we can’t be certain, according to our guild’s intel, it seems the D-Day is March 10th. It seems they are aiming to match Warlord’s 1-year anniversary.”

Corrupt Count.

It was currently Warlord’s hottest issue.

At the same time, the Corrupt Count quest was nearing its end. Most of the Top 30 Guilds were around 80 percent of its completion.

The problem was that the Hydra Guild was much quicker than the rest. They weren’t just fast. The Hydra Guild had already found out who the Corrupt Count was, and they were now beginning to prepare for its raid. As the other guilds who didn’t even know who the Corrupt Count was, it was driving them crazy.

“It goes without saying, but we cannot let the Hydra Guild succeed on their Corrupt Count raid.”

If they were to do so, their profit would be too much.

First, they would be able to get large amounts of Corrupt Count Chronical Uniques. They would be able to equip many of their skilled first division members with Chronical Uniques. Considering the value of Chronical Uniques, the Hydra Guild would then hold a powerful ace up their sleeve.

Furthermore, they would receive amazing titles as well.

Most important was the public evaluation.

“If the Hydra Guild catches the Corrupt Count, I guarantee that the Hydra Guild will take most of second quarter’s ratings.”

In broadcasting, trends were absolute. If the Hydra Guild captured the Corrupt Count, many viewers would use them as their main broadcast channel, and Hydra Guild would receive even more profit from it. That would then lead directly to strengthening their forces.

It was a good chain of events for the Hydra Guild, but it was bad for the rest of the competitors.

If they were just playing a game, they could let such chain of events slide.

However, the Top 30 Guilds weren't just gaming. They were doing business. Tens of thousands of people were working under their brand, and they were dealing with tens of millions of customers. They couldn't just let this slide.

There was only one answer.

“As such, the five guilds gathered here must work together to stop the Hydra Guild.”

They had to make sure that such a thing never happens.

For that reason, five guilds had come to unite under a common front. To stop Hydra Guild's capturing of the Corrupt Count, they were prepared to do whatever it takes.

“Let's first make a peace agreement. The guilds gathered here now will not physically clash with each other until the 31st of March. Anyone against it?”

No one raised their hands.

“The peace agreement is as follows. We are to share all information regarding the Corrupt Count. If the Hydra Guild captures the Corrupt Count, any information we have would be meaningless anyways. Although you might not like it, it's better to use the information before it becomes useless scrap. Anyone against it?”

Again, no one raised their hands.

“That will be all for now. I will send the related documents by email.”



Taking off her V-Gear, Choi Sulyeon lightly brushed her hair down. Then, she immediately closed her eyes and became lost in thought.

‘So it’s come down to this.’

Corrupt Count.

Thinking of this word, Choi Sulyeon grit her teeth. As if that wasn’t enough to quell her anger, she shuddered.

“Ggrrrr, so annoying!”

She was confident. She was confident that she and her guild would stand above all others and complete the Corrupt Count quest.

However, the reality wasn’t so nice. She was indignant as she even had to join hands with other guilds to stop the Hydra Guild from going ahead.

‘Hmph.’

At this time, she ruminated on how this happened.

In truth, the answer was simple.

She and the Stormhunter Guild were simply not as good as the Hydra Guild. That was it. It was the result of the Stormhunter Guild’s players and guild operations being weaker than Hydra Guild’s.

In other words...

‘This is not enough. I need even more skilled players by my side.’

If she couldn’t fill this gap, the Hydra Guild would do better in the next main scenario quest as well. Choi Sulyeon and her guild would become nothing more than a sideshow.

That was a fact Choi Sulyeon could not accept.

‘A skilled player. One with more talent and skill than a jewel.’

She bit her lips lightly.

The figure of a certain player glimmered in her head.

Chapter 44. Searching For Migi (3)

[Hyrkan]

- Level: 40
- Class: Magician
- Title: 14
- Stats: Strength (277) Stamina (83) Intelligence (183) / Magic Power (240)

‘I finally got my magic power past 240 points.’

Watching his upgraded stats, Hyrkan clenched his fists with a happy face. At the same time, the gold colored fur gloves on his hand rolled into a ball.

‘Level 40 Magic Power Switching set for 3,200 gold.’

When Hyrkan turned his head from the stat window, the hair on the lion head he was wearing fluttered in the air, and when he turned his body, the fake tail on his lion body followed.

Lion suit.

This Halloween party costume was the Magic Power Switching set Hyrkan purchased.

3,200 gold!

It was rather cheap for a level 40 item set with a decent magic power boosting stat. What Hyrkan was wearing was worth more than 4,000 gold.

Of course, there was a reason that it was so cheap. In fact, Hyrkan's body was fully displaying the reason.

‘It's cheap, but...’

Hyrkan slowly looked down at his feet. Watching the large hobbit-like lion fur boots, Hyrkan made an awry expression.

‘For some reason, I don't think it was cheap.’

There was a fad.

About 8 months ago, when level 40 players were best of the best, a video made by Ranker class magicians went viral. In it, the level 40+ magicians were wearing animal suits, which resulted in animal suits to trend for a short while. It was the result of people trying all sorts of concepts to get attention.

However, as always, no trends lasted forever.

The animal suits created during this time were then shunned by people afterwards. As a result, they ended up selling for much cheaper than other armor with the same stats. After going through

owner after owner, the lion suit had now ended up in Hyrkan's hands.

‘There are too many people trying weird concepts in Warlord. This was worth over 10,000,000 won back then. What a shame.’

In truth, it was so cheap because the prices had gone down since then. When this suit was first made, the price of a level 40 Magic Power Switching set was enormous. After all, it was used by those who didn't care about spending large sum of money on gaming.

“Shit.”

In any case, it was bad.

No matter how good its options were, wearing such clothing in hunting grounds would bring nothing but mockery.

However, this wasn't the reason Hyrkan was so bitter. What's worse was that this animal suit was much better than the clothes he had been wearing before. Thanks to this, Hyrkan was once again reminded of how awful and disgusting his old clothes were.

‘When I get my level 50 items, I'm going to have to get better looking clothes even if I lose out on some stats.’

Then, with his newly bought clothes, Hyrkan made a small vow to himself and set foot towards Churu Castle.



Churu Castle.

Located far away from Bangtz Castle, this castle was smaller than the Figurs Castle or Bangtz Castle that Hyrkan had visited before. If compared, its size was probably a third of either of the castles.

However, Churu Castle's atmosphere was vastly different than those of the other two castles. This difference was evident from just the castle gate.

Hyrkan was wearing the Subjugation Association's default armor saved onto his 3 item slot. As he passed the castle gate, a few players had caught sight of him and were talking amongst themselves.

“Hey, he's wearing the SA default set”

“Did he get here by himself? Considering how he's hiding his item settings, he's probably quite high leveled.”

Low whispers. Of course, there was no way for Hyrkan to hear what they were saying. Even so, Hyrkan could tell what they were talking about.

‘Those are eyes of wolves, not hyenas.’

Churu Castle was founded 7 months ago by the Sweepers Guild, one of the Top 30 Guilds. As such, it was not one of the starting point castles. This meant that there weren't people staying near the castle gate eyeing for potential newbies to trick. This was reinforced by the fact that there were large amount of level 30+ monsters on the way to the castle.

Therefore, most people visiting the Churu Castle had fair amount of experience and knowledge. It was only natural that players looked at others differently than they would newbies.

As for Hyrkan, he enjoyed this feeling.

‘I made it this far.’

It was a proof.

‘Although I still have quite a way to go, I have the groundwork to catch up to Rankers.’

It was proof that Hyrkan had grown as he expected.

Currently in Warlord, those who could call themselves ‘good gamers’ were between level 50 and 70. The ones like Hyrkan who were prepared to spend their life playing Warlord were above level 80. 1st in the rankings was currently level 109, while 100th was level 101.

Although it wasn't easy to catch up to them, Hyrkan's growth speed was incomparable to anyone else. Those who could reach level 40 in 2 months would only be the highest Ranking players. For this reason, Hyrkan could be confident.

With a full smile on his face, Hyrkan quickened his pace towards the Subjugation Association branch.



[Searching for Migi.]

-Quest rank: Rare

– Quest level range: 40+

– Quest content: As per Ahimbree's orders, find traces of the agent named Migi, and complete the mission he could not. Acquire information on Agent Migi at Churu Castle's Subjugation Association branch.

-Quest Reward: 500 gold and additional rewards.

-Miscellaneous: You will receive a penalty if you do not complete this quest in (29 days 9 hours 33 minutes)

Checking the content of the quest, Hyrkan let out a sigh.

‘Fuck.’

The conversation he had just now with a NPC popped up in his head.

After arriving at the 3rd floor of Churu Castle's Subjugation Association branch, Hyrkan talked to an NPC.

"You are the one lord Ahimbree sent."

It wasn't a particularly noteworthy conversation.

"Agent Migi's mission... his mission was surveillance. His job was to observe the places where Corrupted Stones continued appearing after removing them, and to find the one transporting the Corrupted Stones to these places."

The quest content wasn't anything noteworthy either.

Agent Migi is most likely dead, and Hyrkan would find his corpse when he went to look for him where he disappeared.

After finding his corpse, Hyrkan would most likely take over his mission and track the one transporting the Corrupted Stone. Since he wasn't required to fight any monsters, anyone with the skills to escape could complete this quest.

The problem was the location.

"Where is this place?"

"Bobor Forest."

“What?”

Bobor Forest.

Hearing this absolutely ridiculous name, Hyrkan unintentionally shouted.

“The fuc...”

Although he almost cursed as well, he was able to swallow the words before they came out. Watching this, the NPC tilted his head.

“Is there a problem?”

“No, not at all. Just that Bobor Forest is quite a dangerous place...”

“Bobor Forest is indeed dangerous. That is why you are here. Lord Ahimbree would not have entrusted this job to anyone. Since you’ve passed his test already, you should be more than capable of finding Agent Migi and finishing his mission.”

Watching the NPC’s trust-filled expression, uncontrollable rage roared inside of Hyrkan.

‘Fuck off.’

Hyrkan knew well enough about Bobor Forest.

‘Come on, what’s up with this difficulty setting? Level 40+? Bobor Forest is a hunting ground for level 70+ players!’

Bobor Forest is a vast forest located below Bobor Mountain. As one might expect, Bobor Forest covered a large area and many different types of monsters inhabited it. This was Bobor Forest’s special trait. Generally, in Warlord, the types of monsters that could appear in a hunting ground were limited. This made it easy for players to set their items and set up strategies for fighting. However, because of the vastly different types of monsters inhabiting Bobor Forest, players had to have multiple item sets and also have multiple strategies in mind.

Furthermore, monsters from level 40 to 70 equally lived in this area. This was also quite problematic. This made Bobor Forest too difficult for level 40 players to use as hunting grounds. At the same time, level 40 monsters weren’t worth money nor the experience for level 70 players. For them, it was much more efficient to use other hunting grounds.

The finishing touch was the boss monster, Bobor Ogre. In truth, most people that visited Bobor Forest was there to hunt this boss monster. At this point in the game, Bobor Ogre was a monster worth quite a bit of money.

In any case, Bobor Forest was too far for Hyrkan. It was too difficult. It was on a completely different level than the Lizard Swamp or the Dead Woods.

‘I’ll die for sure.’

Even if his goal wasn’t to fight, the risk was too big.

The problem was that Hyrkan couldn’t refuse this quest.

“This stone has a magic casted on it. Since Agent Migi also has this stone, it will react when you are near him.”

“Thank you.”

“Good luck.”

That was the end of the conversation.

Hyrkan looked at the stone he received back then. In reality, he wanted to throw this stone far into outer space. His current mood was the worst of the worsts.

‘I mean, I know Warlord sets its quest difficulty high, but isn’t this too much?’

All of Ahimbree’s quests so far were high in difficulty. Just the Nested Egg quest wasn’t something someone of Hyrkan’s level could complete. It wasn’t something meant to be done in partied units, but as part of a guild. In fact, it really was a quest made with guild participations in mind. Main scenario quests were quests that

governed Warlord's world, and thus was very balanced to be made for guild-level units than party-level units.

This was the root of the problem.

Hyrkan was able to complete quests that were far above what those his level could handle. Since he completed the quest, he had to receive the next one, and he ended up receiving a quest meant for a level 60 player at level 40.

Of course, this was to be expected. It was because Hyrkan was that good. He should in fact be quite happy about it. It meant Hyrkan was better than what Warlord's system could have ever predicted.

However, this wasn't the real problem.

The quest he received this time was one that would give him a penalty if he failed to complete it on time.

And this penalty...

'If I can't finish this quest, I'll get my ring taken away.'

Was having to return the Pursuer of Corruption Ring.

It was a ring that came with a responsibility, which, in this case, was this quest.

‘Damn.’

If his Pursuer of Corruption Ring was taken away, he would lose at least 50 points of magic power. This would result in a huge problem for his future plans. Above all, it was impossible to obtain a ring like the Pursuer of Corruption Ring for something like 10,000,000 won.

Give it up?

If he couldn’t receive it, he would just feel bitter and move on, but he would not let himself hand over something he received.

There was no such thing in Hyrkan’s dictionary.

‘What should I do?’

That said, heading to Bobor Forest would be worst thing he could do.

Since he had 30 days, he could try to level up as much as possible and search Bobor Forest with only a little bit of time left. Even so, he could not guarantee this plan would succeed. Not only would it be difficult to hit level 50 in 30 days, but being level 50 would also not help his situation much.

‘If only I met with Ahimbree after leveling up a bit more...’

If he knew, he would have purposefully delayed his meeting with Ahimbree.

Of course, it was too late for regrets. Besides, Hyrkan aside, even Ahimbree could not possibly have predicted this.

‘I have no choice here, do I?’

Hyrkan covered his face with his hands.

Like so, while Hyrkan was silently murmuring to himself in the corner of 1st floor of the Subjugation Association branch, a group of players passed by Hyrkan.

“Did you hear? It seems like Hydra Guild is going to catch the Corrupted One soon. What should we do? Go watch?”

“Do you even know who or where? ... how much do you think you can get from catching the Corrupted One? I wonder what titles you’d get.”

“I’m just curious what the other Top 30 Guilds will do. I don’t think they’ll just sit by and watch...”

“They’re probably already doing all they can do to hinder the Hydra Guild. If they catch the Corrupted One now, they’ll be the number 1 guild without a doubt.”

“Hm, but what happens with the main scenario quests when the Corrupted One gets caught? Do they all get completed, or do they end incomplete?”

“Not sure... this is the first main scenario quest, so probably no one knows.”

This conversation.

‘Hm?’

Their short conversation turned a switch on in Hyrkan’s head.

‘Wait a minute, if the Corrupt Count gets caught, all scenario quests related to the Corrupt Count ends!’

It seemed like there would be no need to search for Migi.

Chapter 45. Bad Move (1)

It was now March, but the end-of-winter chill was still in the air. Heavily clothed people filled the streets, and a few who could not stand the cold went into nearby coffee shops for shelter. Because many were in similar situation, there was a long line of the orders.

By the coffee shop's window, there was a shabby looking man.

The man tapped on his touch screen tablet PC, breathing harshly with his nose red. It was easy to tell that the man had been enduring the cold weather in front of the coffee shop for quite a while. Even putting his current state aside, he did not seem to be doing good. He was thin as if he hadn't been eating much, his thick glasses showed he had bad eyesight, and his hair was unkempt.

However, what was most suspicious and unsightly was the fact that he was stuck to the window like he was a sticker.

‘Damn it, why is the Wi-Fi so slow? Your coffee's so expensive. At least provide better service.’

He was clearly trying to use the free Wi-Fi that the coffee shop provided to its customers. This man was, of course, An Jaehyun. The reason he was going through all this trouble on such a cold day was to get this free Wi-Fi.

He knew it was not the best thing to do. If he paid for a coffee, took a seat and started working, he would at least be able to stop his runny nose.

An Jaehyun's toils came to an end...

‘Okay.’

A short time later.

An Jaehyun tapped on his tablet PC, and sent several emails to multiple accounts.

After finishing his work, An Jaehyun turned his tablet PC off, stuffed it under his armpit, and removed himself from the coffee shop window.

As he headed straight home, An Jaehyun couldn't help but sigh. When he did, his breath was easily visible due to the cold weather.

‘Here's a super special service for anyone. I don't care who, so catch the Corrupt Count and open a door to a new era.’

The future had changed, and a new era was now starting.



As the Top 30 Guilds had their own live broadcast channels, their guilds ran in different ways than other guilds. One difference was their Information Team. As one would expect, the Information Team was in charge of managing information and reporting

important facts to the guild.

There were many reasons for running an Information Team. First, it was important to receive feedback on customer satisfaction. It was also to receive potentially valuable information. Of course, about 80 percent of reported information were completely useless. Of the remaining 20 percent, 10 percent were so bad that the team wanted to throw the sender into the jail. In other words, only 10 percent of information were somewhat useful.

Finding useful information from this pile of garbage was truly hard for those in the Information Team.

But what choice did they have?

“God, it’s all trash. Like, this one is asking us to find a missing cat. What the hell?”

They were being paid for it, so they couldn’t not do their job.

“That’s cute. Look at this. This one says it’ll tell us the identity of the Corrupt Count.”

In any case, the Information Team organized the tips they received. Although most were thrown out, they were still checked in the process. It was a subjective process, as what might be a jewel to one may be trash to another. It was especially so in the case of information.

In this sense, these two were fortune's favorites.

“Corrupt Count's identity? That's the tip? Ha! If you sell that information, I'm sure it'll go for at least 100,000 dollars.”

“Should I just throw it away?”

“There's 99 percent chance that it's fake, but we can't be completely sure, so let's save it for now.”

Red Bulls and Stormhunter.

Only these two guilds were able to see a jewel for what it was worth.



The representative figures of the Top 30 Guilds were well-known by the mass. With their faces being broadcasted every day, their faces were hard to forget. If that wasn't enough, all members of the Top 30 Guilds wore their guild uniforms, some with several sponsorship logos on them.

Rightly so. In order to get more fans and sponsorships, they had to make themselves shine as much as possible.

In other words...

“Well, hello? If it isn’t the Hydra Guild’s 8th Head, Natal?”

If a representative player from a guild was trying to hide his identity, even going as far as wearing the Subjugation Association NPC’s clothing, then there had to be a reason behind it.

Red Bull Guild’s 3rd strongest member, Bullfight Keems, greeted one of the nine heads of the Hydra Guild, who was not wearing his usual nine-headed Hydra cape.

Natal didn’t seem happy to see Bullfight Keems, as he made an intimidating expression.

“What is the Red Bulls Guild doing here?”

However, Bullfight Keems had an even more intimidating expression. His nickname, Bullfight, was aptly put, as he was an intimidating, 2-meter-tall black man. His first impression was always bad, as no matter how intimidating one tried to look, he would not look half as intimidating as Keems’s smiling face.

At the moment, Keems smiled as he looked at Natal’s intimidating expression.

Watching his smile, Natal unknowingly flinched.

“There’s no reason we shouldn’t be here, is there? Is there a problem?”

Realizing he had flinched, Natal came to his senses and replied.

“No.”

“I’d like to ask a question as well. What are you doing here? In a different clothes than usual no less. This must be the first time I’ve seen you without your cape on. Though, I must admit, that look suits you quite well.”

“I have my reasons. So, do you need something from me?”

“Of course not. Be on your way.”

With that, Natal turned back. Then, his followers turned back along with him before they walked away as a group.

Watching Natal leave, the corner of Keems’s mouth curved up to a smile. Immediately afterwards, Keems looked at a guild member next to him and tapped his wristwatch twice with his right index finger.

Then, his comrades quickly changed their item slot and switched their clothes.

The Red Bulls uniform wearing players quickly changed to their battle gear, prepared to fight at any time. Meanwhile, Keems started talking through his voicetalk program.

“Captain, captain.”

-What’s up?

“It looks like that tip was real. Natal is here.”

-Natal? Hydra Guild’s 8th Head?

“He was even wearing the Subjugation Association NPC clothes instead of his usual Hydra cape. If I wasn’t looking carefully, I would have mistaken him as an NPC and passed by.”

-Has Natal appeared in any of Hydra Guild’s recent broadcasts?

“I have no clue. I’m not really a fan of them, you see. Why don’t you ask Yel? Isn’t she next to you?”

-How did you know?

“Isn’t she always next to you?”

Even as he said this, Keems couldn’t help but laugh. He found it funny that the perfect Specialist when fighting monsters was too dense to realize the feelings of a woman so close by.

Of course, his laugh didn’t last long.

“What should we do? Attack them? If you’d like, we can make a mess and buy some time.”

-No, stand back for now. If that place really is the Corrupt Count’s castle, the Hydra Guild must have most of its members nearby. Keems, losing you would be the biggest loss.

“I can think of it as a two day vacation, no big deal.”

Suddenly...

“KEEMS!”

“Mm? W-What? I’m talking to the Captain.”

A comrade of his called out his name. He turned around reflexively, and his eyes went wide as he realized why his comrade called out to him. A wave of uniformed players entered his eyes. After catching sight of Keems and his crew, the uniformed group also walked towards them.

A strange atmosphere developed.

“Captain, there are about 40 members from the Stormhunter Guild here.”

Stormhunter.

In the Top 30 Guild's overall rankings, they had the power, numbers, and authority to rank within the top 5. The Red Bulls was similar to the Stormhunter Guild.

As one might expect, the two guilds were in fierce competition to get ahead of each other.

-The Stormhunters?

Keems's eyes narrowed as he stared off into the distance. What entered his sight first was a short-haired girl. Keems could immediately tell who it was.

“Stormhunter Guild's princess is here.”

Storm Princess Hahui.

The 3rd strongest member of the Stormhunter Guild, and a Specialist raised by the Stormhunter Guild for the purpose of PvP.

Although it was a long time ago, Keems had once been killed by her hands.

Keems's expression turned rigid.

“What should we do?”

-Stormhunters, how troublesome. Do they look like they have the intent to attack?

“Seeing as how they stopped in their track after seeing us, it seems they didn’t think we would be here.”

– Then... it seems that tip didn’t just come to us. Fine. First, we’re going to avoid clashing with the Stormhunter Guild. If you can negotiate something there, do so. I’ll talk to the Storm Queen on this end.

“Yes sir.”

With that, their call ended.

Keems raised his hand immediately. With his tall height and large build, it was easy to see him from a distance. Keems spoke as he waved his hand.

“Looks like we’re here for the same reason. No reason for us to fight. By the way, Natal just passed by here.”

It was the start of a new development.



Whoosh!

A Golem's arm whisked through the air with a heavy sound.

Grrrrr!

In front of it was a level 50 monster, Giant Bear.

Although it was level 50, as a mid-sized monster, the Giant Bear gave several times more experience and material than small-sized monsters. It was usually hunted by 5-man parties rather than 3-man parties.

As such, it was impossible for a single Golem to overwhelm it. The thick arm swung by the Golem struck the side of the Giant Bear standing on its hind legs, but the Giant Bear didn't falter and instead, counterattacked.

Boom!

The Giant Bear's right foreleg struck the Golem's body. The blow was strong enough to cause the heavy stone Golem to lift its left leg up slightly. On the Golem's left shoulder, where the bear had attacked, the bear's thick claw marks were clearly visible.

At that moment, the Golem brought its arms together and took a defensive stance like a boxer. As if it had been waiting for it, the Giant Bear began to beat on the Golem with its forelegs.

Boom, boom!

The sound of the two heavy bodies clashing scattered into the surrounding with a loud, strong reverberation.

At the same time, the Giant Bear's eyes turned red from the continuous attack as it glared at the Golem.

Kuooo!

Soon, the Giant Bear roared out angrily. It signaled that all of its attention was put on the Golem. In that instant...

Sss!

A Skeleton Warrior that had been hiding popped its head out from a nearby tree.

The Skeleton Warrior was small. It was only a meter tall, and had reddish-black bones.

Blood Goblin.

As a goblin type variant, the Blood Goblin was surprisingly quick. However, as it was rare, it was hard to see them, much less catch them.

The speed of a Skeleton Warrior made from said Blood Goblin was incomparable to other Skeleton Warriors.

Tadadada!

As it started running, it quickly neared the Giant Bear.

Then it leaped.

Tat!

It was enough to make anyone wonder where such strength came from in such a small body. It jumped close to 10 meters in distance, and landed on the Giant Bear's back. Then, with knife made from its own bones, it struck down at the Giant Bear's back.

Stab!

From the distance, the knife looked more like a needle.

Kuooo!

The Giant Bear cried out from the sting in its back. It seemed like it took little to no damage.

That was because it wasn't an attack meant to deal damage.

The real objective...

[The Giant Bear falls under the Demon Curse.]

[The Giant Bear falls under the Slow Curse.]

Was to activate the two curses. The curse quickly spread to every corner of the Giant Bear's body.

The E rank Demon Curse decreased its stats by 13%, and the F rank Slow Curse decreased its movement speed by 10%.

The Giant Bear became visibly slower, and the Golem took no time in taking advantage of it. It lowered its guard, dodged the Giant Bear's attack, and clinched the Giant Bear with its two arms.

Kuo!

The Giant Bear began to beat on the Golem's head with its arms in order to get it off of itself.

Meanwhile, four Skeleton Warriors slower than the Blood Goblin Skeleton Warrior approached the Giant Bear. As the Skeleton Warriors had used the Dead Woods' Skeleton Warriors as material, they had large builds and large swords. Although they were smaller than the Giant Bear, they were no less intimidating.

The four Skeleton Warriors quickly went to work as they slashed at the Giant Bear's skin. The attacks interlinked like the gears of a

clock, quickly turning the bear's body ragged. Meanwhile, the Golem still had the Giant Bear bound in its grasp.

Kuo!

In the end, the Giant Bear fell with a short cry.

The dead Giant Bear did not move, and the Skeleton Warriors ceased attacking. Then, they stared at their master. There was a tree with a thick trunk in their line of sight, and on its branches was Hyrkan, sitting down.

However, Hyrkan was paying no attention to his summons whatsoever.

‘Where's the news? It's been 3 days since I tipped the 29 guilds besides the Hydra Guild. Don't tell me they threw it away thinking it was fake?’

At that moment...

-Hydra Guild started the Corrupted Count Raid!

A new news came up.

March 5th. The Hydra Guild had started the Corrupted Count Raid much quicker than the anticipated date.

Seeing the news, Hyrkan got up and shouted.

“Okay! Eh?”

And with that shout...

“Ah?”

Thud!

He fell from the tree, ending up in a 大 position.

The Skeleton Warriors and the Golem approached Hyrkan and stared at him intently. Hyrkan shouted at his servants almost instinctively.

“What? You think this is funny? Turn around!”

Chapter 46. Bad Move (2)

- The Corrupt Count raid is different from any of the raids so far.
- Can you be a little more specific?
- The Corrupt Count isn't a strong monster, but a man of authority that exists in the Warlord world. It's not just because he is human. So far, raids have been against middle or large sized monsters. This time, it's against an NPC. This difference is what makes this raid different from all the other raids.
- Is there a reason the date for the Corrupt Count raid is set to be a week before Warlord's 1st anniversary? Many say that it would have been better to wait one week until the anniversary. Do you have any plans to delay the raid for a week?
- Upon much consideration, we decided that now was the time. The most important thing is to increase the chances of success. Even 1% helps. Everything after that is secondary.
- That was the last question. Do you have anything you'd like to say?
- We will be the only ones who meet with the Corrupt Count.

That was the opening of the Corrupt Count raid broadcast.

An Jaehyun watched the video, holding his tablet PC in his left hand, while his right hand was dropping glucose candies into his coffee. After filling his coffee to the point it was about to overflow, An Jaehyun finally took a sip. The bitter taste of the coffee and the glucose candy's cheap sugary taste made the drink taste like a medicine.

Thinking about the live broadcast's ticket he paid for, An Jaehyun couldn't help but wonder.

‘With a price like this, they couldn't have sold more than 500,000 won.’

Before An Jaehyun returned to the past, the Hydra Guild's Corrupt Count live ticket cost was 15,000 won, and 1,960,000 tickets were sold. It was a new record at the time, and the Hydra Guild pulled in over 10,000,000,000 won.

The reason they were able to do so well was that they took their time. The raid date was as one would expect, and the tickets were sold over three days as well. This time, on the other hand, the tickets were expensive and sold for only one day.

As long as the Hydra Guild wasn't stupid, there was no way they didn't know they were losing out. With that in mind, since they were going this far, it could only mean that the situation was urgent.

Taking a sip from his coffee again, An Jaehyun made a glum face.

‘The chance of them failing... is greater than 90%. Yeah, there’s no way.’

An Jaehyun reminisced.

‘Well, they failed in the past, so they would have failed this time anyhow.’

In the past, the Hydra Guild had failed their first Corrupt Count raid.

They fought well and defeated the Corrupt Count. However, when the Corrupt Count’s HP dropped to 0, a new phase activated and the Corrupt Count ran away. It was similar to how the Golden Skeleton ran away. In the end, the Hydra Guild failed to catch the Corrupt Count they defeated, and it took them another month before they succeeded.

‘The fact that he runs away is a pain.’

When the Corrupt Count ran away, a new quest appeared to chase after the Corrupt Count. That was why it took so long to capture him again. If he didn’t run and stayed in a single place, it wouldn’t have taken longer than 10 days to catch him again. Even so, it was amazing that it could last 10 days with all of the Top 30 Guilds waiting in line 24/7 to go into the Corrupt Count raid.

This was the reason An Jaehyun tipped all 29 guilds.

‘If I sold the information, I would have been swimming in Wagyu steak all year.’

Of course, he felt like it was a waste.

If he sold the information on the Corrupt Count’s identity, he would have made an enormous profit.

However, it wasn’t smart to do so. If An Jaehyun received the money on his bank account, people would be able to trace him no matter what he did. It wouldn’t be so bad if it just ended there. The problem was that people would grow suspicious of him. If someone who started Warlord 3 months ago knew the identity of the Corrupt Count, it would be Tobot Soft that would come looking for him, not the Top 30 Guilds.

If An Jaehyun had an amazing plan in mind or the connections to back him up, he would have been able to sell it, but An Jaehyun didn’t have such an ability. This was something An Jaehyun knew better than anyone else.

However, he didn’t want to let this end as a freebee.

‘Whatever.’

Because of his last tip, his future tips would hold credibility. If An Jaehyun became a Ranker class player, then there would be no problem selling information openly. After all, it was common for guilds not part of the Top 30 Guilds to sell them information

regarding the main scenario quest.

‘I’ll think of it as my business card.’

Of course, An Jaehyun had no intention of selling any information.

After all, everything would be his in the future.



Storm Queen Shir and Matador Chev.

Two guild masters representing two of Warlord’s Top 30 Guilds met in the middle of a forest.

It wasn’t just the two of them. Ten players they brought encircled the table they were sitting around. They were also Warlord’s Ranker class players.

It was a scene that would send chills down the spine of any Warlord fan.

It was in this stage that their conversation started.

“It seems the Hydra Guild just went into the Corrupt Count’s castle.”

The first to speak was Storm Queen Shir.

“I’ve heard.”

“What do you think is going to happen? What do you think is the chance of them succeeding on the First Kill.”

“Half-half? They’ll either succeed or fail.”

“What a lazy reply for someone who’s 9th in Rankings.”

At Shir’s harsh tone, Chev went further into detail.

“I’m sure they prepared to an extent, but they started much quicker than their D-Day. Even if they were ready material-wise, it can’t be said that they are mentally prepared. Moreover, the pressure on them to succeed on the First Kill is big. In terms of percentage...”

Before Chev could even finish his thought, Shir spoke out.

“I’ll bet 1,000,000 gold on them failing. You?”

Chev didn’t flinch in the slightest at Shir’s words, and immediately replied.

“I have no interest in betting.”

“Weak.”

“I have no interest in getting the short end of such an obvious bet.”

At the phrase ‘obvious bet’, Shir chuckled. At such an open laugh, the Red Bulls players behind Chev bursted out in anger. In response, the Stormhunter Guild members also twisted their neck, as if they were warming up for battle.

Of course, a fight did not break out. It wasn’t a meeting arranged for such a purpose.

In fact, it was the opposite.

“Let’s stop fooling around and cut to the chase. There’s no point in either of us trying to get the upper hand when we’re here to join hands.”

It was arranged for them to join hands.

The Stormhunters and Red Bulls. These two guilds obtained the qualifications to participate in the Corrupt Count raid after the Hydra Guild.

For boss monster raids, challengers received the qualification in

the order that they came. It was the unwritten rule of Warlord. Since the Hydra Guild was the first to claim the Corrupt Count's castle, they were first. Then came the Red Bulls Guild and the Stormhunter Guild.

In reality, this was a rare occasion. When guilds joined hands to participate in a raid, it was usually the case that the guild further down the raid order made offers to the guild higher on the raid order. It was never the case that guilds 2nd and 3rd in order joined hands, especially when they were usually fierce competitors.

The fact that this meeting happened nonetheless spoke to how important this raid was.

It was easy to tell how valuable the Corrupt Count raid was. It was more important than any of the other raids up to this point. Furthermore, this was their only chance. If they failed, the Corrupt Count raid would end before they would have the chance to try again. As such, they needed to make sure they succeeded on their first try.

Plus...

“So? How much did your tip say?”

“Probably as much as yours.”

“You didn't succeed in contacting the sender, did you?”

“We tried using the address he sent the tip from to contact him. We saw that he read our message, but he didn’t reply. How about you?”

“No comment.”

There was a story behind this Corrupt Count raid.

All 29 guilds received an anonymous tip regarding the identity of the Corrupt Count.

At first, they thought it was done by an insider from the Hydra Guild. However, the tip used as bait was just too valuable for that to be true. Plus, if the sender’s goal was to sell the information, he would have contacted a few guilds. Contacting all 29 lacked common sense.

Another possibility they considered was that the sender had a personal grudge against the Hydra Guild and was doing this to get revenge. However, this possibility was quickly struck down. They knew that the Hydra Guild’s management wasn’t so poor.

They couldn’t help but be curious about the identity and intention of the sender. The only thing they knew for sure was that the sender had a motive for doing so.

In other words, if the Corrupt Count raid was dragged on, there was a huge chance that he would make a move again.

In that case, it was to the two guild's advantage to sort out the situation before the sender made his move.

As such, there was a clear reason for the two guilds to join hands.

Talking about various things now was nothing more than pointless small talk. That was the reason the two guild masters were acting so bluntly. They already had their answer, and what they talked about at this point would not change it.

“I’m not really a fan of all this official business stuff.”

“We have to at least look the role.”

“I think we’ve done a good enough job.”

With that, Shir put her hand out, and Chev took her hand in response.

“Come to think of it, this is the first time we’re shaking hands.”

“I haven’t shaken hands with any other guild masters, you know?”

“What an interesting turn of events.”

“Agreed.”

The Stormhunters and Red Bulls officially joined hands.



4 hours into the Corrupt Count raid.

-How is the current situation?

– Not good. But we still have a chance.

Boom!

Watching the flashy effects and thunderous roars of various skills, An Jaehyun took off his glasses and turned off his tablet PC.

An Jaehyun blinked to water his dry eyes as he knitted his brows.

“Tsk, tsk.”

An Jaehyun audibly clicked his tongue.

‘That was a raid unfit for the Hydra Guild’s name.’

The one on its receiving end was obviously the Hydra Guild.

‘From 1 to 10, there was not a single good thing. A raid specialist

guild that's not part of the Top 30 Guilds would have done much better.'

The Hydra Guild's Corrupt Count raid was simply the worst.

It was fine up to the point of meeting the Corrupt Count. The process of revealing all the facts and making the Corrupt Count reveal his identity on his own was perfect. It was enough to make An Jaehyun applaud at how their preparations and quest progressed.

The problem arose after the Corrupt Count summoned his corrupted monsters. The Corrupt Count ran away and the battle broke out.

There were seven monsters he summoned. Tankers aggroed the monsters and split the battlefield into seven fronts. It was perfect up to this point. However, the Hydra Guild lost in three of these seven battles.

'This isn't the Hydra Guild I know. It's not that they were lacking in ability. It's just that they couldn't bring it out to the fullest.'

Just like that, the Hydra Guild was forced to fight the Corrupt Count when they didn't have some of their forces. They didn't have much of a choice. At that point, it was either do or die.

Immediately afterwards, the Corrupt Count awakened his Power of Corruption.

Then, the main battle broke out.

Here, the Hydra Guild made yet another mistake.

‘In a do or die situation, you have to go all in. Why is the second head sitting in the back?’

The Hydra Guild’s second head, Sohank, was said to be the strongest in fighting.

However, he joined the fight only after 5 minute had already passed.

It was a huge mistake.

Although it was fine when fighting large-sized monsters, when fighting human-form monsters, the ace card had to draw the aggro without holding back. Because of the unknown anonymous tip, the Hydra Guild took too much precaution and held their ace back.

‘To think they forgot about such a basic concept. They must have had a mental breakdown.’

In the first place, if the ace card didn’t work, the raid was bound to fail.

Of course, it was okay to save the ace card until later. It’s not

something to be used willy-nilly, but that was before fighting the boss monster. When fighting the boss monster, one had to go all or nothing.

As a result of Sohank holding back, the Hydra Guild failed to hold the Corrupt Count's aggro, and he changed his target to the magicians and the priests in the back. In an instant, three magicians and two priests were killed, and such a loss in a situation where they were already lacking in manpower was devastating.

It was the death sentence.

That's when An Jaehyun stopped watching.

'No need to waste my time and watch them die. The live broadcast will probably end soon with an apology interview.'

He knew the broadcast would end soon.

In any case, what was important to An Jaehyun was that the Hydra Guild failed without having properly caught the Corrupt Count.

'The next one's going to need to succeed.'

It wasn't a good news to An Jaehyun either. After all, An Jaehyun wanted the Corrupt Count to die as soon as possible. For that reason, An Jaehyun wanted the next challenger to succeed.

If the Corrupt Count didn't die within the next 25 days, there would have been no sense in him giving out such a valuable information.

'I've done so much for you all, so someone kill it please. I don't care who... though it'd hurt my soul if the Stormhunters get it.'

An Jaehyun made a wry smile.

To be honest, he wasn't in a good mood. There was no way he would be when he was on the losing end of the trade. It seemed things would stay that way for a while as well.

'I'm probably going to have to share the Immoral Prince too.'

The second main scenario quest after the Corrupt Count, the Immoral Prince.

It was unlikely for An Jaehyun to be the main character in the Immoral Prince scenario quest. To gain something, one had to pay the price. In the end, he would probably have to share it.

It was painful for someone as greedy as An Jaehyun.

But it would just be until then.

'But in the Ruined Kingdom...'

In the third stage, he had no intention of sharing anything with anyone.

‘I’ll take it all.’

The Top 30 Guilds will have to fight over An Jaehyun’s leftovers. That was An Jaehyun’s goal. If he couldn’t achieve it, then there would be no meaning in him going through so much trouble to solo play.

An Jaehyun got up from his seat.

‘Alright, time to go play with my skellies again. I can’t forget to educate them.’

It was time to start gaming again.

Chapter 47. Bulkas Mountain Range (1)

[You have leveled up.]

[You have obtained the title, 'Giant Bear Killer'.]

[You have obtained the title, 'Bear-hunting Skeleton.]

[Skeleton Fragment skill rank rose to C.]

[Slow Curse skill rank rose to E.]

[You have obtained the title, 'Beginner Curse Magician'.]

The consecutive alert sounds were as beautiful as Vivaldi's Four Seasons. Hearing the alert sounds, Hyrkan nodded as if he was listening to music. He did a light shoulder dance, and as if that wasn't enough, he snapped his fingers thrice as well.

Then, the four Skeleton Warriors standing in front of corpses of two Giant Bears began to dance. This time, it was Los del Rio's Macarena, a hit from the 1990s. The scene of the four dancing skeletons was memorable to say the least. The combination of three largely built skeletons and a tiny goblin skeleton was quite cute in a way.

Of course, the scene of a man dancing in a lion suit wasn't so cute.

'That's one big problem down.'

If anyone was watching the battle Hyrkan just had, he would be unable to say Hyrkan was funny, disgusting, weird, or ugly.

Hyrkan; He had fought against two Giant Bears at the same time, when hunting only one usually took a 5-man party.

While the Golem and Skeleton Warriors fought the Giant Bear, he kept the aggro of the other Giant Bear. All the meanwhile, he watched over their fight and continuously snapped his fingers and manipulated the Skeleton Warriors' movements.

It was a battle that surpassed the level of being impressive to being monstrous. It wasn't possible with just excellent individual battle skills. It also needed excellent situational judgement, tuning, and commanding ability.

In other words, it was a difficult fight.

In reality, not only did Hyrkan lose most of his magic power in the process, but he also lost two of his Skeleton Warriors. Considering that he didn't lose any of his Skeleton Warriors when fighting against just one Giant Bear, it showed the difficulty of the fight.

If Hyrkan's aim was an efficient fight, he wouldn't have fought against two so stupidly. He would have lured just one of them or avoided the fight altogether.

There was a reason he went through such a difficulty.

'I hope Romany Film can make a hit this time as well.'

He was in need of a new video to follow his Golden Skeleton video.

‘With this video, I’ll make a definite profit.’

Hyrkan’s popularity had gone up much higher by now, and his YouTube page had surpassed 80,000 subscribers. Just the Skull Clown video had 700,000 views, the Golden Skeleton video 400,000 views, and his introduction video 500,000 views. Other than that, all his other videos had at least 100,000 views. Both his donation amount and views were higher than what someone of his subscriber count should get.

Hyrkan was now at a level where he could earn an acceptable salary depending on the quality of his videos.

From now on, making videos could officially be considered his job. If up to now, he had been handing out his business card for free, it was now time to reap the harvest from his subscribers and viewers.

Not to mention, he was now able to make videos on a completely different level than before.

Because he had the Golem.

Even so, just using the Golem to easily hunt monsters was stupid. It was something any necromancer could do. Something like that

wasn't worth paying for.

For that reason, Hyrkan did something no one else could do – hunting two Giant Bears alone.

At the same time, it was a form of training.

‘I’m going to have to train my ability to fight against many servant monsters before fighting the boss monster.’

Hunting a single strong monster was no longer a difficult thing to accomplish for Hyrkan.

However, it was still tough when he was fighting multiple monsters. It was also an ability Hyrkan needed to have if he really wanted to become the best in Warlord. This was easy to see. Even in this time’s Corrupt Count raid, the problem was not fighting the Corrupt Count, but reducing the losses as much as possible while fighting against the boss’s servant monsters.

Hyrkan had no plans of becoming the strongest with just what he had now.

He knew that with what he currently had, he wouldn’t be able to keep himself safe, much less aim to be the strongest.

He needed more.

He needed to completely surpass the ability of the Hero Slaughterer Hyrkan.

Only in that way...

[The quest, 'Searching for Migi', ends.]

“Oh! The Red Bulls did it!”

Would he be able to make the upcoming new era into his own.



[You obtained the title, 'Destroyer of Corruption.']

[You obtained the title, 'Hero of the Hiban Kingdom.']

[You obtained the title, 'Corrupt Count Slayer.']

[You obtained the title, 'Corrupt Count First Kill.']

The simultaneous ringing of alerts. It was a sound that would normally bring joy to Warlord players, but the Red Bulls's guild master, Chev, couldn't bring himself to smile.

With a stiff expression, he stared at a young lady standing in the distance.

A short-haired beauty wearing heavy armor engraved with the Red Bulls's logo.

Storm Queen Shir.

Although her left arm was missing and several parts of her armor crushed, no man would be able to doubt her beauty.

It was the same for Chev. Setting aside any attraction as member of the opposite gender, seeing her always made him think ‘a beauty was a beauty!’ There was a reason that it was in past tense. The Shir in front of him now was not a beauty, but a being that would make any monster or demon cower in fear.

‘Amazing. Scarily amazing.’

Although the Corrupt Count raid had been tense, in a way, it progressed quite calmly.

The Red Bulls and Stormhunters alliance didn’t make the same mistake the Hydra Guild did. After watching the Hydra Guild’s raid video, they practiced day in and day out until they almost fainted. They didn’t spare any money on items either. Whether it be equipment, buff potions, or consumable potions, they prepared them in mass. They spent what was normally too expensive to use in other raids like they were drinking water. It was like using 100 dollar bills to feed a campfire.

Thanks to that, however, they still only managed a 6-1 score against the Corrupt Count’s seven servants. Although one team lost, they were able to prevent the team from being completely wiped out.

The battle that followed was just as amazing. They didn't spare their ace cards either.

Matador Chev!

Warlord's Rank 9 player fought on the front line with the help of Storm Queen Shir. Even other than them, some of the most skilled Warlord players fought on the front lines.

The problem was when the Corrupt Count's HP turned to 0.

When they thought it was all over, a fiery black pillar bursted out from the Corrupt Count's body.

It was the start of a new phase.

The pillar became a human-sized fire bomb, and scattered in all direction. The scattered fire mercilessly devoured the players it hit, and magicians with low HP were killed in just a single attack. Unable to have predicted such a situation, the priests were slow to heal or to cast shields. Their losses were big.

Meanwhile, the Corrupted Count had been revived and he began to run away furiously.

Watching the scene, Chev could only sigh. He never would have thought the Corrupt Count would have such a phase.

However, Shir was different. She ran. Dodging hundreds of black fire bombs, even losing her left arm in the process and falling down, she got back up and charged towards the Corrupt Count. In the end, she pierced through the Corrupt Count's body with her sword.

When everyone else was busy celebrating a false victory, she had remained collected.

‘I can see where her arrogance comes from.’

Chev had no choice but to recognize her ability.

She wasn't just a celebrity born as a conglomerate's successor and peerless beauty. She was a skilled player worthy of her title as a Ranker.

It wasn't just Chev. Everyone present was surprised at Shir. They acknowledged her arrogance to be justified dignity.

All except one.

‘Tsk.’

Only Shir did not acknowledge herself.

In reality, the last fight was nothing more than an all or nothing

gamble.

It was by luck that it was the former.

‘It’s still not enough.’

It was still impressive nonetheless.

However, achieving victory in such a close fight wasn’t what she wanted.

‘If we didn’t join hands with the Red Bulls, we would have failed as well.’

An overwhelming battle force and battle strength. A one-sided destruction created by the best players wearing the best items!

That was what Shir wanted.

‘Tsk.’

In that sense, the Corrupt Count raid was a failure. There were still many things her guild was lacking. If she didn’t borrow someone else’s hand, she wouldn’t have been able to achieve victory.

‘More.’

For that reason...

‘I need more skilled players.’

She was now burning with more desire and longing than ever.



On March 16th, the Corrupt Count died.

It marked the end of Warlord’s first main scenario quest, which had continued for over a year.

The Corrupt Count’s death affected the entirety of Warlord.

First, all the quests related to the Corrupt Count ended. Because of this, many players expressed frustration, especially those who had their quests ended in the process.

At the same time, it caused many others to burn in passion.

-The new main scenario quest is starting soon, right? I’m going to properly participate in this one.

-It’s the start of a new era.

-Warlord’s going to change significantly.

Although players had no time to prepare for the first era, everyone had somewhat readied themselves for the second era.

The new era had already started. Few players had already achieved great success through the changed attitudes of NPCs and newly discovered areas.

In the middle of it all, a shocking news was revealed.

It was that the Red Bulls Guild and the Stormhunter Guild had joined hands to beat the Corrupt Count raid.

It was truly newsworthy incident.

- Really? The Stormhunter Guild really joined hands with the Red Bulls Guild?

- Then why didn't they announce it before the raid? Aren't they losing out?

- They're splitting the profits, so they're not really losing out on anything. In fact, didn't they gain more since they were 3rd in order?

- Please. Without the Stormhunter Guild, the Red Bulls Guild would have failed. Then, the Stormhunter Guild would have surely taken it.

- Fuck. If I knew it was like this, I would have purchased a live ticket. When is the paid video coming out?

Although it was common for guilds to collaborate, no one had expected the competing Red Bulls and Stormhunter Guild to join

hands before such a big raid. In fact, their alliance wasn't revealed until after the raid.

It was, of course, what they aimed for since the start.

They had made a contract. The Stormhunter Guild would hide their identity and join the raid. When they revealed this matter, many more people would buy the paid video, and the Stormhunter Guild would take most of the profit from it. In exchange, the Red Bulls would take most of the profit from the live ticket revenue.

It was an unprecedented incident, something no one had expected.

Because of this fact, this incident...

“Waaa!”

Made a huge impact on a certain man.

“Uwaaaaa!”

An Jaehyun. He was currently rolling on the ground holding his stomach.

“Uwwwoooo!”

As he fiercely rolled on the ground, he seemed like he was about to cry. To him, this news was equivalent to seeing a cousin one hated suddenly strike it rich because the land he bought on a whim went into redevelopment.

‘Shit, fuck, shit!’

That was how much of a pain An Jaehyun was currently in.

‘Just why?’

An Jaehyun never expected the Red Bulls Guild to join hands with the Stormhunter Guild. He thought only the Red Bulls Guild would be participating in this raid.

‘Choi Sulyeon. Why would miss ‘I’m the best in the whole world’ do such a thing? She even hid her identity and wore the Red Bulls logo!’

An Jaehyun knew Choi Sulyeon’s temperament better than anyone else. She was the type who believed no one could do what she failed to do, and crushed whoever went against that rule. Naturally, there was no such thing as a negotiation, cooperation, or co-existence in her mind.

One had to either kneel down to her or die.

Choi Sulyeon always forced the same two choices to her enemies. One who won’t kneel would only receive merciless punishment.

Not to mention, the Red Bulls Guild was a fierce competitor of the Stormhunter Guild. It would have been more right to pray for the Red Bulls to fail. But joining hands? That was not something that should have happened.

Of course, the cause of it all was An Jaehyun. The information he leaked caused a butterfly effect, ending with the two of them joining hands.

‘To think I’d help Choi Sulyeon this way. Come to think of it, didn’t I help her at the Peach Store last time? Am I crazy?’

It was true An Jaehyun did so knowing someone else would benefit, but he didn’t think that someone would be Choi Sulyeon. He didn’t think the Stormhunters would succeed, even if they were 3rd in order.

“Haa!”

An Jaehyun threw himself on the floor and let out a heavy sigh. Although he was still sick to his stomach, he didn’t keep complaining.

‘The Corrupt Count’s dead. That’s it.’

A new era had already begun.

‘Although everyone’s different in skill, we’re on the same starting line for the Immoral Prince.’

Everyone was on the same starting line.

An Jaehyun now had the chance to obtain several valuable titles.

‘With my current level, there’s a limit to my reach.’

Factoring in An Jaehyun’s level, there was only one place at the moment where An Jaehyun could obtain an Immoral Prince-related quest title.

“It’s time to go meet the rangers.”

Rangers protecting the Bulkas Mountain Range.

It was time to go meet them.

Chapter 48. Bulkas Mountain Range (2)

‘God damn it!’

As Hyrkan ran through the forest, his face was full of anxiety. He reached into one of many pockets in the lion suit, picked out a Skeleton Fragment, and threw it on the ground.

The Skeleton Fragment quickly bloated up to a single Skeleton Warrior.

Snap!

Hyrkan snapped his finger, and the Skeleton Warrior lowered his body and took on a defensive stance.

In front of the Skeleton Warrior...

Kuooooo!

A roar of a monster could be heard.

Soon after the terrifying roar, a wolf with four drill-like fangs appeared. The Tooth Wolf changed his target from Hyrkan to the Skeleton Warrior.

Crunch!

Running like a race horse, the Tooth Wolf quickly closed its distance to the Skeleton Warrior.

The Skeleton Warrior did not back down in the face of this monstrous wolf. Inside his black eye sockets, two small flames blazed as the Skeleton Warrior showed its willingness to fight.

Hyrkan caught sight of this scene from the corner of his eye. He clenched his teeth and snapped his finger twice.

Although his finger snaps were soundless because of his gloves, the Skeleton Warrior received the command and charged at the incoming Tooth Wolf.

Hyrkan did not stay and watch the outcome.

Instead, he prayed.

‘Sorry skellie.’

The result was too obvious.

Even among mid-sized level 60 monsters, the Tooth Wolf was among the strongest. An original Skeleton that wasn't made out of any materials was not able to buy time against it for long. Normally, it would be 1 second. If it went well, 2 seconds. If the Skeleton Warrior was lucky, it would be 3 seconds. But that was it.

That was all Hyrkan's Skeleton Warrior was capable of. If it wasn't his, it would be knocked down in a split second like a bowling pin.

This time, the Skeleton Warrior was able to buy 2 seconds. The Skeleton first dodged the Tooth Wolf's bite, but was shattered by its following foreleg attack. This attack halted the Tooth Wolf's uncontrolled charge, as the Tooth Wolf landed on the ground after the attack. In other words, it meant he had to start running again.

In that short instant, Hyrkan furthered the distance between himself and the Tooth Wolf by tens of meters.

Krrrr...

The Tooth Wolf let out a low growl and turned its head. Under its front leg was the Skeleton Warrior which had now lost the light in its eyes. The Tooth Wolf then...

Crack!

Crushed the Skeleton Warrior.

Although Hyrkan couldn't hear the sound, he shuddered while he was running.

'Damn it.'

It was only after 3 minutes had passed that Hyrkan was finally

able to stop and catch a breath.

Of course, he wasn't particularly out of breath. After all, he was in a game. He was still full of strength, and he promptly climbed up a thick tree. Anyone would be able to tell by his monkey-like quickness that it wasn't his first time doing this. After climbing the tree, Hyrkan immediately looked around his surroundings.

Ssss...

The leaves of the tree swung calmly with the wind. Not wanting to break this calmness, Hyrkan silently sighed in his heart.

‘Whew.’

Only after he let out a silent breath did he finally relax.

‘The Monster Belt is lifted, but this place is still hell for my standards.’

Currently, Hyrkan was on his way to the Bulkas Mountain Range. He had been waiting at the Herb Castle, the nearest castle to the Bulkas Mountain Range.

The Herb Castle was an unpopular castle amongst Warlord players. No castles had been discovered to its east, and no one set out to explore the area either.

This was because it was a so-called Block Field, an area purposely managed by Warlord's system for the purpose of main scenario quest progression.

Of course, the Block Field disappeared once a certain condition was met. It could be when someone received a certain quest or when a certain quest was completed. Once the Block Field was removed, players would be able to enter the area and any areas beyond.

It went without saying that the disappearance of a Block Field signified a chance to obtain treasures that were hidden inside. As such, there were always players waiting near Block Fields. They weren't just waiting either. They were always on the lookout for competitors. This was why the Herb Castle wasn't popular. Players in it always looked at each other with eyes of suspicion.

In any case, Hyrkan already knew that the Bulkas Mountain Range existed beyond the Herb Castle. He knew what route to take as well. At the same time, he knew that the Block Field would disappear when the Corrupt Count was killed.

It went without saying that Hyrkan would be the first one to go past the Block Field and arrive at the Bulkas Mountain Range.

The only problem was that the area Hyrkan had to go through was filled with monsters ranging between level 60 to 80. As skilled as he is, Hyrkan could not guarantee his safety.

Even so, there was a reason Hyrkan was taking such a risk to go

through this place.

Hyrkan turned his head and looked out far beyond the overgrown forest.

‘In the past, I couldn’t even dream of a discovery title at this level.’

Beyond this overgrown forest was the Bulkas Mountain Range.

And in the Bulkas Mountain Range...

‘If I meet the Bulkas Mountain Range rangers, I can probably obtain 3 titles on the spot.’

Were several magnificent treasures.

Although no one knew about the Bulkas rangers at the moment, they would soon become one of the most well-known NPCs in Warlord. There was a simple reason behind it.

‘What a nice bunch.’

They gave out a lot of things.

That was how games worked. When monsters or NPCs became famous, it was either that they were incredibly strong or gave

incredibly good things.

The Bulkas rangers were the latter.

As a level 60~80 hunting ground, the Bulkas Mountain Range was a decent hunting ground for many players. Although it wasn't the most efficient, one could sufficiently use it to train from level 60 to 80.

On top of this, the Bulkas rangers gave out many quests related to the Bulkas Mountain Range. The reward was rich in EXP or gold. They even gave out a really bountiful quest from time to time. As there were many quests, there were also many chances to obtain titles.

The rangers were generous in many ways.

What was the most valuable in their generous rewards was...

‘If I can win over the Bulkas Ranger Master, Maoong, I can place my spoon on the Immoral Prince quest.’

The Bulkas Ranger Master, Maoong.

He was a key figure in the Immoral Prince quest.

Just this was enough for Hyrkan to risk his life on this trail. Hyrkan once again looked at his surroundings.

Most players would be too fearful of a game over to move rashly.

But although Hyrkan found the situation quite annoying, he did not have any fear.

Because he was experienced.

‘At least it’s better than being chased by those Stormhunter trash.’

A lot.

Being chased or running for his life was something he had grown quite tired of.

Thanks to his experience, Hyrkan was able to run again.



A female magician dressed like a male and a man wearing a scaled armor glowing red were walking through the Boyz Castle.

Their appearances were did not lack anything to attract the attention of players around them.

“Whoa, look at that! He’s wearing a full Fire Lizard set!”

“Doesn’t the full set go for over 100,000 gold? That aside, don’t you have to be above level 90 to wear it?”

“Who is he?”

It was an extremely expensive armor made for top level players.

It was no different than a man and a beauty driving through town with the best open car.

Unaffected by the attention they were getting, they were murmuring through their voicetalk program.

“Did you find out who the informant was?”

“From what I can tell, no one has the slightest idea.”

“How is that even possible? It’s not just some incident. There are only a few who could get their hands on such a valuable piece of information.”

“In that few, there isn’t a single person who would inform all of the 29 guilds. It’s not them no matter how I look at it.”

“Doesn’t that mean there’s an incredibly strong player that we don’t know about?”

“It’s true that we don’t know the identity of some of the Rankers. We have no way of knowing anyone outside the Rankings too.”

“Things are already going off our plan.”

“It’s not like we can do anything about it. Our job is to just do what our employer tells us to do. Also, it’s not like we work under them with a great sense of duty.”

A brief silence hung between the two.

“By the way, where are they sending you this time?”

“Sweepers.”

“Why are you going to Sweepers and not me? Don’t they need more magicians?”

“Isn’t it the other way? They have a lot of magicians, so they’re looking for more front-liners.”

“I guess... well, since the Sweepers are moving, it looks they’re going to sweep through an entire Block Field. It’s going to get troublesome. Oh yeah, the Dragon Lizard’s egg. What happened to it? Did you find the one who took it?”

As soon as the question was asked, the armored player stopped in

his tracks. The magician tilted her head. Their eyes met, and the magician could easily see the scowl on the swordsman.

“Whoever it was, if I catch him, I won’t let him off easy.”

With that, the swordsman continued on his way.



It was just one step.

[You obtained the title, ‘First One to Step onto the Bulkas Mountain Range.’].

With almost completely depleted magic power, Hyrkan stepped into the Bulkas Mountain Range and was greeted by a new title.

Moreover, that one step was one with a lot of meaning behind it. It meant he was a step in front of those who he had only been chasing after. At the same time, it signified the start of the legend Hyrkan would leave behind.

Of course, Hyrkan wasn’t in any mood to give such deep thought into his step.

Hyrkan immediately checked his stat window through his watch.

“Not bad.”

Checking the newly acquired title's options was more important to Hyrkan.

After confirming its options, Hyrkan raised his head in satisfaction.

The Bulkas Mountain Range in front of his eyes seemed more distant than impressive.

The mountain range was full of trees with razor-sharp leaves and with countless number of monsters. Hyrkan was the sole player against such a force.

‘It would be foolish to move in thoughtlessly with the magic power I have now.’

What seemed the most distant was Hyrkan's magic power. Hyrkan sat down where he was and started chewing on a magic power recovery gum.

As he chewed the gum, magic power slowly filled Hyrkan's body.

‘If only I can buy an expensive recovery potion and fill my magic power in one go.’

Warlord had many different recovery items. Of course, the more

effective it was, the more it cost. For example, a candy made from the sap of the rare level 150 Vampire Tree filled up HP by the percentage while it was in its user's mouth. Not only that, but it also raised stamina by an incredible amount. If a tanker with full resistance setting was eating this candy, he would practically be invincible during the duration of the candy. Of course, the cost of the Vampire Tree Sap was enormous. It was a must have for top-level boss monster raids, and the demand was several times the supply. As such, with a raid like the Corrupt Count raid coming up, it sold for an incredibly high price.

Other than that, those who focused solely on leveling up were not stingy when it came to recovery items like this.

The most representative was the First OneSulwoo. To stay as the highest leveled player, he was always fully buffed, with the best items and skills. Although he must earn an enormous amount of money from it, the amount he spent far outweighed the amount he earned.

Of course, for Hyrkan who had to savor the 5 gold gum, such a thing was in the distant future.

However...

‘I’m here.’

It wouldn’t be too far.

Hyrkan got up from his seat.

Then, as if it had been waiting,

Whoosh!

An arrow landed near the Hyrkan's foot. Seeing the arrow, Hyrkan smiled.

Chapter 49. Bulkas Mountain Range (3)

A middle-aged man wearing a beret opened his heavily bearded mouth.

“Then I will trust your abilities.”

“Yes sir.”

With that short reply, Hyrkan turned away. In his ears...

[You have obtained the title, ‘The Inaugurator.’]

An alert told him of the new title he acquired. Although he had expected it, he couldn’t help but quiver in happiness. Holding in his desire to yell out in joy, he stepped out of the log cabin he was in. Only after stepping outside did he let out what he was holding in. He clenched his right fist and shook it.

YES!

No matter who looked at it, it was easy to tell the meaning behind his clenched fist.

‘That’s the 3rd title!’

When he stepped into the Bulkas Mountain Range, Hyrkan met up with the Bulkas rangers. That was when he obtained the ‘First

to Encounter the Bulkas Rangers' title. Raising the class-related stat by 7 points, it was quite a fine title.

'The Inaugurator' title he just received came from being the first to get quest from a newly discovered castle, town, or area. As it raised all stats by 7 points, it was even better than the other titles.

Moreover, the 'First One to Step onto the Bulkas Mountain Range' title raised all stats by 4 points.

Even though he did not level up, his stats had gone up quite a lot.

'Yep, this is the best part about Warlord.'

There was a reason why Warlord was called a Title War. Since one could receive stat points that would otherwise require 4~5 levels, the competition for titles was obvious.

Of course, this wasn't enough to satisfy Hyrkan. Any skilled player would have similar titles to boost their stats.

'Now then, what should I hunt?'

The best thing about discovering a new region was not the titles...

'What would be popular?'

But the monsters and the hunting guide video.

Warlord viewers wanted new things. No matter strong or weak, amazing or laughable, viewers watched it if it was new. Moreover, videos on new monsters were spread by Warlord fans without the uploader having to do any advertising.

Furthermore, Hyrkan was gaining popularity lately. His Double Bear video got a good number of views, and although it wasn't as much as Skull Clown, it was enough for his fans to be satisfied. Moreover, thanks to the Double Bear video, Skull Clown received more attention and surpassed 900,000 views.

If he added a new monster on top of it?

‘If it’s the Bulkas Mountain Range, Armor Monkey is probably the best.’

Hyrkan smiled.



A 1.5 meter tall monkey was wearing an armor and a helmet, and was holding a mace in its right hand.

Kii kii!

The monkey was currently riding on top of a Golem, and was

brandishing the mace in its hand. The mace moved nimbly along the Golem's head, shoulder, and back as it kept pounding into them.

Puhat!

Blobs of dirt fell out from the Golem's body like flesh.

Whoosh!

Although the Golem swung its arms above its head to catch the monkey, the monkey dodged the Golem's slow-moving arms easily. At times, it even climbed down the Golem and climbed back up, as if to play with it.

Although they had weight behind them, the Golem's arms did not amount to much without the speed.

It was being toyed with in every sense of the word.

The one that was most enraged by this sight...

"Ah come on!"

Was Hyrkan who was controlling the Golem 20 meters away with copy mode.

Looking like he was washing his hair, Hyrkan was about to explode. Even so, Hyrkan held himself in, and focused his attention on trying to capture the Armor Monkey.

‘Come on, get caught already. How is this little bastard so nimble?’

What set off Hyrkan’s fuse was...

Kii kii!

The excited screech of the Armor Monkey. Although Hyrkan wasn’t sure if it was really excited or if it was part of its setting, to Hyrkan, it seemed like the monkey was screaming and calling him an idiot.

‘You’re dead.’

Hyrkan canceled the copy mode and charged towards the Golem.

Hyrkan’s figure as he ran seemed very much like a cheetah charging towards its pretty.

Tadat, tadat...

Using all 100% of his strength stat, Hyrkan seemed more like a fearsome predator than a human being.

The distance between him and the Golem quickly fell to 5 meters.

At that moment...

Pat!

Hyrkan converted the momentum from his charging speed into jumping power and he pointed his foot like a spear-tip as he flew towards his target.

Puk!

Then, his foot landed directly on the back of the Armor Monkey swinging his mace madly.

Drop kick!

An attack rarely seen in Warlord struck the Armor Monkey. The Armor Monkey flew like a cannon ball and rolled on the ground seven times after it landed.

Kiik!

The Armor monkey screeched as it rolled on the ground. When it came to a stop, it got up with all the more screeching. It looked towards the Golem, and what entered his eyes was...

Thwack!

Hyrkan's knees.

After landing his dropkick, Hyrkan had already begun to run for his second attack.

His knee struck the Armor Monkey's head, and its body followed suit.

This was the power of an all-strength necromancer.

But that was it. Although it was powerful and forceful, the damage dealt couldn't have been big. After all, the Armor Monkey was a level 60 monster, and Hyrkan was only level 46.

Even if damage was dealt, it would only be enough to draw the aggro.

Kiii!

The enraged Armor Monkey let out an angry screech and got up from the ground once more. It fixed the helmet on its head, hit the ground twice with its mace, and glared at Hyrkan. Then, it charged towards Hyrkan without hesitation.

The distance between them was 3 meters. Considering both of their stats, it would only take a single step to cover the distance.

With a single leap, the Armor Monkey closed in on Hyrkan, as did the mace in its hand.

Kii!

The Armor Monkey's screech became clearer as it neared Hyrkan.

Whoosh!

At the same time, the sound of the mace cutting the air sounded out. The mace seemed to want to crush Hyrkan's head. Even in face of such a terrifying attack, Hyrkan did not flinch in the slightest, and simply twisted his body to the side as the mace neared him.

Whoosh!

The mace passed by Hyrkan's eyes.

Then.

Puhat!

It landed on the ground along with the Armor Monkey. The Armor Monkey's eyes seemed to flash in surprise as if to say 'you dare dodge my attack?'

The Armor Monkey got even more enraged and sought to make its next attack. It turned its head towards Hyrkan and showed its teeth.

Thwack!

However, before the Armor Monkey could even take a glimpse of Hyrkan, Hyrkan had already moved to kick his head like a soccer ball.

Kiiii!

This time, the Armor Monkey let out a pained cry as it fell to the side. Watching the Armor Monkey through the hahoe mask, Hyrkan shouted out with a frown.

“From here, I will show you all how to screw with... I mean, how to hunt an Armor Monkey.”

It was the announcement of an Armor Monkey’s death... no, torture.



[You obtained the title, ‘First to Discover the Armor Monkey.]

As soon as the fight ended, Hyrkan stared at the corpse of the

Armor Monkey on the ground.

It was a monster that had greatly annoyed him.

If it was the past, it would have ended with a bit of lashing out. However, the current Hyrkan was different.

‘What if I use this guy as material for Skeleton Fragment?’

It was a habit that had developed after becoming a necromancer.

What monster should I use as material? It was a question he always asked.

In reality, up to now, he had put his focus on sheer battle power. When he was making a Skeleton Warrior, he sought to make one that fought the best. The next thing he looked for was image. It looked the best when all Skeleton Warriors looked the same. For someone who was making a living making videos, it made sense that such a thing was so high in priority.

At the same time, having the same type of Skeleton Warriors was beneficial in most battles. Most necromancers used a defense-first attack-second strategy. In such a fight, it was important for the Skeleton Warriors to move fixedly like a machine. For machines, it was, of course, best to use the same type of parts.

However, Hyrkan’s mind had changed recently. Even if there were more Skeleton Warriors he could use, the amount he could

use to attack a single monster was limited. Although he would need more when hunting large-type boss monsters, such a battle wasn't rare.

Most importantly, the Skeleton Fragment skill itself gave a huge selection of materials.

As long as he wanted to, he could make as many Skeleton Fragment as he wanted. It wasn't hard to retrieve a Skeleton Fragment either. When a Skeleton Warrior was destroyed, he just had to clench his fist and say 'retrieve.' Then, the Skeleton Fragment would return to his hand.

He didn't need to use the same material, and he could freely change the material he used as long as his cooldown and magic power allowed it.

In other words, he could make a group of Skeleton Warriors of various types.

In a war, variety meant increased utility.

Watching the Armor Monkey melting into an ice-cream, Hyrkan couldn't help but wonder.

'How should I use this guy?'

Hyrkan. He was now thoroughly becoming a necromancer.

“Well, I’ll first make it into a Skeleton Warrior and bully it a bit. You dare make fun of me. You won’t die so easily.”

Of course, his personality was the same as ever.



When the Corrupt Count died, a new era began.

In face of this new era, those who made Warlord their career once again began charging straight ahead. A new era, a new stage, a new content... everyone was on the same start line.

For the Top 30 Guilds that failed to kill the Corrupt Count, it was a chance for them to be in the spotlight. For the guilds that weren’t part of the Top 30 Guilds but were still large enough to rival them, it was a chance to steal the Top 30 Guilds’ live channels and make a name for themselves.

It was the start of a war.

And what the most important thing in this war was to bring as much attention to themselves as possible.

All ways and means were used.

Some leaked a scandal between a beautiful female Ranker and a

handsome male Ranker, some declared wars against other guilds, and some leaked weaknesses of other guilds.

However, what stood out the most were not gossips like these.

“Ugo Sanchez reached level 30 in just 38 days. As expected of The Machine’s Rank 3 player. Untalented players couldn’t hit level 30 even with 100 days... isn’t this level up speed a new record?”

“Did you watch Rony Jackson’s new hunting video? It was no joke. I’ve never seen someone at level 20 fight like that. I’ll bet once Rony Jackson grows up a bit more, he wouldn’t lose in a PvP against the Rankers. Although PvE is important, he’s a true monster when fighting against players.”

New, rising stars. They were currently the ones who received the most attention in Warlord.

In particular, Rankers from other VR games who transferred over received the most attention. Someone had made a Rookie Rankings, which received just as much attention as the Top 100 Rankings.

A war had begun for these rookies to become the super rookie that stood above all others.

In the middle of this war...

“Did you watch that video? The Armor Monkey video. It’s a new

monster, but there's already a hunting guide on it."

"A hunting guide for a new monster? You probably need to pay for it, right?"

"No, it's free."

"Someone released a new monster hunting guide for free? Who? What guild?"

"It wasn't a guild, but a person... someone in a weird getup with a strange mask. What was his name again..."

"A person? What's his class?"

"Necromancer."

"What?"

Hahoe Mask Hyrkan. His name was starting to reach out to all corners of Warlord.

Chapter 50. Lucky Drop (1)

Pabat!

Hyrkan was running forward with the mane of his lion head fluttering in the air.

At Hyrkan's destination...

Kikii!

Was an Armor Monkey letting out an impatient cry. Having lost its arm to a Skeleton Warrior made from using Armor Monkey as material, it had lost its will to fight and was trying to run away.

However, when it turned around to escape, it faced the one person it should have never faced.

It was Hyrkan.

When the distance between him and the Armor Monkey was close enough, Hyrkan's longsword stabbed through the T-shaped hole in the Armor Monkey's helmet.

Stab!

Hyrkan could feel the depth of the stab on his fingertips. It meant the sword stabbed through deeper than he had expected. Although

it would be horrifying feeling for most people, Hyrkan smiled as if he enjoyed it.

‘How clean.’

Hyrkan’s remark was accurate, yet terrifying.

Hyrkan finished off the Armor Monkey with a single strike. The Armor Monkey drooped down like a toy hanging on a nail.

Chwing!

When Hyrkan swiftly pulled his sword out...

Thud!

The Armor Monkey’s body fell to the ground powerlessly.

[You have leveled up.]

[You have obtained the title, ‘Half to Hundred.’]

However, Hyrkan did not even glance at the Armor Monkey that had fallen on the ground.

He quickly put away his sword, and fiddled with the watch on his left wrist.

[Hyrkan]

– Level: 50

– Class: Magician

– Title: 20

– Stats: Strength (349) Stamina (119) Intelligence (239) / Magic Power (301)

‘Level 50, finally.’

Hyrkan had finally reached level 50. It was a definite reward and proof of his efforts.

However, Hyrkan did not show extreme sense of happiness like he previously did with his body. Swiftly, as if he was reading through a boring school textbook, he put all stat points into strength and closed the stat window.

What Hyrkan looked at next was his skill window. A list of skills he owned appeared in a hologram in front of him.

– Summoning

[Skeleton Fragment (C)], [Madness Helm (E)], [Bone Armor (E)], [Skeleton Magician (E)], [Skeleton Science (E)], [Golem Summoning (F)]

– Curses

[Demon Curse (D)], [Slow Curse (E)]

-Body Modification Skills

[Skin Sewing (E)]

‘I hit level 50, but not a single skill ranked up.’

After checking his skill ranks, Hyrkan turned his gaze away from his watch. Although he would normally dance in happiness at achieving a level milestone, the current Hyrkan was only making a serious face.

At the same time, Hyrkan’s body did not show any signs of ease. As if he was in a hurry, Hyrkan checked the time.

‘I’ll be cutting it a bit close, but I should be able to log out after reaching the Ranger Village.’

After he finished checking the time, Hyrkan quickly began running.



The wall of a small one-room apartment was adorned with a rather unfitting 50-inch monitor. Everything else seemed old and broken down, but the monitor looked brand new like a technology transported from the future. The expression ‘pearls before swine’ could accurately describe the scene.

On the minitor, a video was being played. In an overgrown forest

that could not possibly exist in this world, a monkey wearing armor was fighting with a warrior made of only bones and a golem made of mud.

The whole scene was very much like a movie. One that was worth the money.

However, the one currently watching the video, An Jaehyun, did not seem very interested in the video.

He was sitting on his overused mattress full of cheese-like holes in only a tank-top and underwear. His gaze was fixed on his tablet PC, not the 50-inch monitor. Moreover, the video being shown on the tablet PC was exactly same as the one on the large monitor. But what An Jaehyun was really looking at were the comments below the minimized video.

- As expected of Hahoe Mask Hyrkan. This one was just as good as the others.
- Hyrkan's skeletons are the best in the world!
- I'm raising a necromancer after seeing you. I'd appreciate any tips on raising Skeleton Warriors.
- Is it possible to put skeletons up for adoption?

Most comments were positive. An Jaehyun made a light smile. No one would be unhappy with comments like these.

Then...

‘Hm?’

A needle-like comment caught An Jaehyun’s attention.

– I don’t get what’s so great about this idiot. I don’t understand the thought behind people like him spending so much money to spec-up just to make videos like these. Is that fun? I’d be a better necromancer if I tried.

It was a rather long comment, one that would normally make the reader frown. However, An Jaehyun made an even bigger smile.

“If he said this to my face in Warlord, I’d have a watch on the spot, heh.”

If he crumbled because of comments like this, the time An Jaehyun spent would have been worthless.

In any case, what really made An Jaehyun’s mood great were the donations. Although only 3 minutes had passed since he last checked, An Jaehyun once again checked his donation box. 1 dollar... 1 euro... donations were coming in endlessly. Hyrkan converted the donations into the Korean won, then made an even bigger smile.

“Uhahahaha!”

‘I finally feel like a Warlord gamer!’

His hunting guide on the Armor Monkey hunting was a bigger hit than he had expected.

‘I should really call those monkeys my filial sons.’

As he expected, a never before seen monster became a topic of interest for many. Because of the new viewers coming to see his hunting guide, his Skull Clown video had surpassed 1,000,000 views as was currently approaching reaching for 1,500,000. The Double Bear video had surpassed 800,000 and was going for 1,000,000, and his other videos were doing just as well.

It goes without saying, his revenue had increased as well. Donations were one thing, but he had finally gotten sponsorship deals. Although the sponsor wasn’t desperate, An Jaehyun was still able to receive 500,000 won for a 1-week contract.

‘With this, I can buy have meat for dinner every day!’

It was more than enough for An Jaehyun to eat meat 3 times a day with expensive coffee as a dessert.

‘It’s been a while. Why don’t I go oil my stomach up?’

At that moment, An Jaehyun’s watch began to vibrate.

– Your conversion request has been completed. Thank you for

using our service. For further information, please call...

“Finally...”

When he saw this message, the thought of meat disappeared from An Jaehyun’s head.

‘I’ve finally got the bullets.’

It wasn’t the time to do something like that.

When he hit level 50, there was only one thing on his mind. Finding new items.

And now, he had acquired the funds to make his purchase.

‘16,000 gold. Even if I have to use all of it, I’ll get some proper items.’

16,000 gold was equivalent to 16,000,000 won. After paying off his debt, An Jaehyun converted most of the money he earned to gold. Although he left some for emergency use, it was only enough to pay for his one-room rent, maintenance fees, V-Gear fees, and living expenses.

Since he was now making money on a regular basis, he would soon have more money to spend. Even so, what he did was not something most people would have done. When a poor person

made 10,000,000 won playing a game, he would most certainly think to save it for the future. Very few, if any, would spend it all back into the game.

It was an all-in, in every sense of the word.

However, An Jaehyun did not feel uncomfortable by his spending at all.

He had always been like this with Warlord.

Any money he earned through Warlord, he re-invested it into the game. He didn't put any of it into savings. As a result, when he was betrayed by the Hahoe Mask Guild and the Stormhunter Guild forced him to quit the game, his life had practically ended.

Even so, An Jaehyun didn't have an inkling of mind to put his money into savings in this lifetime as well.

After all, An Jaehyun's life was not in the real world, but inside the game world.

‘Oh!’

An Jaehyun's eyes flashed with surprise.

‘At this price?’



“Huhu.”

Watching himself in the video he just took, Hyrkan couldn't stop his almost offensively disgusting laughter from flowing out. He no longer had the childish lion suit. In its place, a bit wacky yet stylish skeleton armor was warming his body.

Skeleton Snake set. It was a level 50 item set made from the boss monster Skeleton Snake.

‘This design is not bad at all. Who made it?’

Including the helmet, top, bottom, gloves, and boots, it cost a total of 15,000 gold!

It was expensive.

However, it was worth every gold coin.

‘Just my magic power is 75 points higher than before.’

It wasn't just the design that was good.

The items' options were great as well. Just by changing his items, his magic power had risen by 75 points. Considering his old lion

suit was a Magic Power Switching set, a 75 point increase was truly significant.

‘My stamina is... about 50 points higher?’

His stamina stat had risen by about 50 points as well.

Even to a magician, the stamina stat was important. If the stamina stat was too low, one became what was called the Sunfish Magician. Simply said, a single touch by a boss monster would kill them.

Of course, just these weren't enough to make the items cost just as much as a car.

By standard, the helmet and glove parts of a set were Unique rank. The cost of Unique items was on a completely different level than Rare items. Rich players ran at them to acquire even 1 more stat points. That is, they came with brand name effects like designer purses and shoes did in real life.

What affected the price the most was the bonus option that came from wearing all 5 parts.

Hyrkan checked the bonus option one more time.

- Decreases the magic power used by summon-related skills by 10%.

Hyrkan couldn't help but smile.

This bonus option was the reason Hyrkan was able to buy the Skeleton Snake set for a cheap price of 15,000 gold. If the bonus option was for curse-related skills, the price would have about 30,000 gold. In reality, Skeleton Snake magician sets, priest sets, and curse magician sets sold for at least 30,000 gold.

In other words, that was how unpopular the necromancer class was.

In any case, Hyrkan was satisfied with the items he purchased. It was perfect in every way. The design fit the necromancer class, not to mention the bonus option.

There was only one problem...

‘What do I do for the weapon...’

He was unable to buy a weapon. Although he had bought a Normal rank item just in case, for someone who was aiming for the top, a weapon of at least Rare rank was paramount. Moreover, now that he was level 50, it would be hard to raise another 10 levels within a month. Although there might be no problem using a low-end car for a day or two, but the effect of doing so would become clear within 30 days.

That was how important good items were. As time went on, their

effectiveness became even more evident.

However, since he didn't have the money, he couldn't buy any.

‘I could get myself something good if I sold this lion suit set... but that's going to take a while. It's too much of a waste to sell it under price too.’

It would take some time before he could sell off the lion suit set. However, he couldn't just suck on his finger and wait. He had to do something.

There was only one choice.

“If I don't have a weapon, I'll just have to make one.”

It was time to aim for what all gamers liked. A lucky drop.

Chapter 51. Lucky Drop (2)

A lucky drop!

To gamers, it was just as good of a word as level-up. It was similar to a package delivery that made one to open his door with anticipation.

To achieve this taste of a lucky drop, one just had to hunt monsters. There was no other way. It was enough to just hunt monsters.

Kiyaa!

A 2-meter tall skeleton with a red lizard-skull made a strange cry. This lizard-skull skeleton was carrying a blazing flame in each of its hands.

This skeleton was the Skeleton Magician made by using a Lizard Sorcerer as material. The flames it was holding in its hands were like grenades, and the sound it had made was to alert its allies. After it had warned its allies, it threw the flames in its hands without hesitation.

The target was the back of a level 60 monster fighting tens of meters away. The Sword Monkey.

Kiii!

With its back now on fire, it let out an earsplitting scream. It didn't show any signs of stopping either. Considering that the fire was spreading wildly across its body, it was no surprise.

It was truly a bloodcurdling scream, one that would make someone unable to fall asleep at night.

However, such a scream was unable to affect its surroundings in any way.

Clang!

Metallic sounds rang out from different areas as did more screams of Sword Monkeys.

Different kinds of Skeleton Warriors were continually clashing swords with Sword Monkey. The pain-filled cries of the monkeys and metallic ringing from the clashing of swords easily buried the bloodcurdling screams of a single Sword Monkey.

However, there was one sound that distinguished itself.

Whoosh!

It was the sound of a Golem swinging its arm like a whip and smashing a 1.3 meter tall Sword Monkey.

Boom!

With a balloon-popping sound, the Sword Monkey flew across the air and hit the trunk of a tree. It was unable to make any noise. Only the sound of sword monkey's bones being crushed could be heard.

As if it was content with its attack, the Golem turned its head and stared at the Sword Monkey that had fallen on the ground.

Kiikii!

At the same time, another Sword Monkey that had seen its friend being killed by the Golem jumped on the Golem's body and slashed its sword at it. As the Golem was made of dirt, the slash marks of swords could be clearly seen. It was a bit later that the Golem turned its gaze towards the Sword Monkey that was leaving slash marks on its body.

In fact, it was the Blood Goblin Skeleton Warrior that made a move before the Golem. Faster than any of the other skeletons, it ran towards the Sword Monkey with the cursed dagger given by Hyrkan, then stabbed the monkey's back.

Kiii!

The Sword Monkey screamed.

[Sword Monkey falls under the Demon Curse.]

[Demon Curse skill rank rose to D.]

The result of the scream was reported to Hyrkan in the form of an alert.

However, Hyrkan ignored the alert. Wearing his skeleton armor, Hyrkan put all his focus into weaving in and out of battles and controlling the overall battlefield. He couldn't afford to divert his attention.

‘Right side needs help.’

Hyrkan didn't fight on the front lines. He was fighting in a support style. If he saw a 1 versus 1 battle, he joined the battle for a brief moment to make a 2 versus 1 situation. If a Skeleton Warrior was being pushed back against 2 monkeys, he aggroed one of them and turned the battle to 1 versus 1.

‘Gotta attack the left side once.’

He wasn't aggressive either. Even when he was helping, he only made one or two light stabs with his sword. Of course, an all-strength necromancer's light stab couldn't exactly be considered light. Its power and effect was as clear as day.

‘Let's finish that one off!’

Hyrkan quickly approached a Sword Monkey on the right side and pulled on his right wrist. When its sword-holding hand extended out, a Skeleton Warrior it was facing slashed down on its

arm.

Puhat!

Its arm was cut off in an instant.

Hyrkan simply tossed aside its cut-off arm and stabbed the Sword Monkey without rest. As if to copy Hyrkan's actions, the Skeleton Warrior continually stabbed it with its sword as well. Soon, the Sword Monkey was deformed to the point it couldn't be recognized.

With that as start, the sound that had been filling the air began to quiet down.

Hyrkan looked around him.

'Is this the 200th?'

The monster Hyrkan was hunting for his lucky drop was none other than Bulkas Mountain Range's Sword Monkey. It was a monster that would soon become one of the most popular monsters in the region. Although bones and skin were useless, it dropped a material called Sword Fragment that was used to make good level 50 Normal items.

At the same time, Sword Monkeys were categorized as small-sized monsters, and because they lived in large packs, they were rather weak by in small groups. They were one of the easier

monsters to hunt and many could be hunted at once. Moreover, there weren't a lot of people currently in Bulkas Mountain Range. Because not many knew the true value of Sword Monkeys, Hyrkan was currently enjoying it to the fullest.

Of course, what Hyrkan was aiming for wasn't the Sword Monkey's Sword Fragments.

'I wish it would drop a Sword Monkey Jewel already.'

What Hyrkan was aiming for was a crafting jewel that Sword Monkeys dropped at a very low rate.

Hyrkan's goal was to make a Rare rank item using that crafting jewel.

In other words, he would stop hunting Sword Monkeys once he got the crafting jewel. Sword Monkeys were no doubt good monsters to hunt, but that was for average players. It was just too easy for Hyrkan. The battle just now was proof of it.

Hyrkan and his summons began fighting a group of 13 Sword Monkeys, and the fight ended in less than 10 minutes. At this point, Hyrkan's battle prowess easily jumped levels. To maximize his level-up speed, he had to hunt stronger monsters.

The problem was that Hyrkan could not find the Sword Monkey Jewel even after hunting close to 200 Sword Monkeys. It was rather troubling as he expected one to drop in about 100 kills.

‘Please. I can’t keep hunting these damned monkeys forever.’

As Hyrkan skinned off the Sword Monkey, he prayed as if he was waiting for a jackpot at a casino.

When Hyrkan skinned the Sword Monkey, it began to melt. Soon, only its bone, skin, and sword were left. After turning them into crafting coins, Hyrkan examined the ground with scrutiny.

‘Shiny. Something shiny. PLEASE.’

However, Hyrkan couldn’t even find a rock, much less a jewel.

“FUCK!”

In the end, Hyrkan exploded.

“WHY? JUST WHY?”

Hyrkan punched the trunk of a nearby tree. Meanwhile, his Skeleton Warriors of various type and Golem stared at him in silence.

If someone who wasn’t aware of the circumstances had seen this, he would surely take a video to upload on YouTube with the title ‘A Crazyman in Warlord!’

‘How can there not be a jewel after killing so many of them?!’

However, if the person knew the circumstances, he would understand Hyrkan’s feelings without doubt.

He had hunted 200 Sword Monkeys. It wasn’t a small number at all. Although they lived in packs, it wasn’t as if they all slept in one place. They were spread out throughout the forest, and the time it took to find and lead them to a place appropriate for battle wasn’t small. At times, Hyrkan even had to run away from strong monsters. With all this, 6 hours had passed since Hyrkan began to hunt Sword Monkeys.

Moreover, he still had not gotten a jewel. How could it not drive him crazy?

‘Was I this unlucky?’

Usually, a jewel dropped in about 100 kills. How could one not have dropped in 200?

He was simply unlucky.

In most cases, one would stop for the day given such a bad luck.

“...No.”

‘I’ve killed so many. The next one is bound to drop one.’

If one didn’t drop until now, it will soon!

It was a simple mindset that trapped many gamers. To them, it seemed as simple as how salmon went back up stream to lay their eggs.

Hyrkan raised his head up

‘I’ll catch one more pack. I’ll stop after that.’

Hyrkan resolved himself.

Of course, this resolution wasn’t bound to end well.



[You have leveled up.]

[You have obtained the title, ‘Sword Monkey Slaughterer.’]

[Your Skin Sewing skill rank rose to D.]

He leveled up.

He obtained a title.

His skill rank even went up.

Most Warlord player would be happy, if not completely overjoyed.

‘This time, please.’

However, Hyrkan couldn’t smile.

“PLEASE.”

As he waited for the Sword Monkeys to melt down, his expression had remained stiff.

Eventually, the Sword Monkeys melted down. Their swords, bones, and skins were on the ground.

However, there was no jewel to be seen.

Still wearing his Hahoe Mask, helmet, and gloves, Hyrkan covered his face with his hands. It was a funny yet sad sight.

“God damn it...”

This was the 1000th monkey. It wasn't just a 1000th monkey. Every time he caught one, he had to skin them as well. It was annoying to just count how many times one breathed. What would it feel like to kill 1000 monsters and still not have the result one wanted?

‘I don't get it.’

It wasn't like Hyrkan was asking for anything big. He simply wanted to get an item he needed as he leveled up a little. He didn't think things would turn out so badly. He wasn't aiming for a Unique item or anything. All he asked for was material for a Rare

item.

But not a single one dropped.

Not a single one!

Hyrkan took his hands off his face.

‘Is it a bug?’

At this point, Hyrkan couldn't help but wonder. In most cases, Rare rank crafting jewels dropped once every one hundred kills. For middle or large sized monsters, the number was even lower. Boss monsters almost always dropped one.

‘Should I just sell what I have and buy one?’

Furthermore, there wasn't really a reason for him to be so adamant on obtaining a Sword Monkey Jewel anymore. By selling the crafting items he got from hunting 1000 Sword Monkeys, he could easily buy a level 50 Rare rank item. Furthermore, Hyrkan had profits outside of the crafting items he gained. Although his lion suit had yet to be sold, it would sell for quite a lot when it did. The amount he made from YouTube wasn't small either.

If he really wanted, he could probably obtain a low-end Unique rank item as well.

‘Damn it.’

But that’s just how humans were. Especially for gamers, once one felt spiteful, not even his ancestor would be able to stop him.

Hyrkan began to agonize over his decision.

The logical side of him told him to stop screwing around and go buy the item from an auction site.

His instincts told also told him to go buy the item; that there was no guarantee the jewel will drop the next time.

However, his sense as a gamer told him that the next one was bound to drop one.

‘I really feel like the next one is going to have it.... I mean, with how many I killed, I won’t be satisfied until it does.’

Next time...

It was how people became addicted to gambling.

Hyrkan got up.

‘I’ll kill just one more pack. Just one more. If that one doesn’t drop it, I’ll buy the weapon even if I have to sell my house.’

At that moment...

“Hey!”

Someone called out to Hyrkan.

If Hyrkan was sitting aloof before, he was by now tense and prepared for battle. Then, he turned towards the direction the voice came from.

What Hyrkan saw was a group of three players. One of them was wearing an armor he had once seen before.

“So it really is Hahoe Mask Hyrkan.”

“See! I told you. I told you he would be here. This is where he took the Armor Monkey video.”

“Interesting.”

They even knew Hyrkan’s nickname. Hyrkan narrowed his eyes.

‘They don’t look like they’re my fans. Don’t tell me...’

Since his job was uploading Warlord videos to YouTube, he had expected some people to recognize him. It wasn’t too big a surprise

in this aspect.

Moreover, he knew not everyone would be happy to see him. After all, he had once had the entire world as his enemy.

Hyrkan prepared to snap his fingers. The fact that he was tense could be seen by his tightly shut mouth.

At that moment.

“My name is Quiyote! Hahoe Mask Hyrkan, I challenge you to a duel!”

A man wearing a lustrous, white armor shouted. It was the White Mamba set.

Hearing this, Hyrkan’s mouth relaxed.

‘Kyaa.’

He could feel the stress he had accumulated disappear in an instant.

Chapter 52. Lucky Drop (3)

The best way to become famous was to defeat someone famous.

This was a fact that applied almost everywhere in life.

Almost everyone who played Warlord wanted to become famous in some way. They wanted their names to appear on YouTube or Google results, and they wanted any video they uploaded to appear on top of the trending feed. Although they tried many different things to achieve this goal, only a few succeeded. The ones who failed bet everything they had for a chance to overturn their status.

They became a Fame Hunter.

“My name is Quiyote! Hahoe Mask Hyrkan, I challenge you to a duel!”

When one became famous, he had to prepare himself to fight off the pesky hyenas.

Hyrkan had also resolved himself to such things. As such, he wasn't too surprised by the sudden challenge.

Hyrkan rubbed his index finger and thumb together.

How much?

Realizing the gesture Hyrkan was making, Quiyote answered with a stiff expression.

“I’ll give you 1,000 gold!”

Hyrkan stopped the gesture he was making and waved his hand as if to say he should just go hunt the Sword Monkeys nearby.

“How much do you want?”

Quiyote asked.

This wasn’t an uncommon sight. The condition or price of a duel wasn’t determined by the challenger, but the champion. It was only right for the challenger to pay some sort of price to the one who was accepting his challenge. Of course, most opted to go for a PK rather than to pay this price.

Hyrkan opened his hand and put out five fingers. Quiyote frowned. The ones who responded were his friends.

“5,000 gold?”

“Isn’t that too much? He’s hot and all recently, but 5,000 gold to fight a rookie is too much.”

“He just doesn’t want to fight.”

“Quiyote, are you really doing this? Why not use that money to go to a club or something?”

However, his friends’ advice didn’t enter Quiyote’s ears. After contemplating for a bit, Quiyote gave his reply.

“I’ll give you 5,000 gold!”

His friends made a surprised expression.

They knew Quiyote was rich. The White Mamba set he was wearing was proof of it. The level 70 full set sold for above 60,000 gold. In the past, the specially made White Mamba set was traded for 50,000 gold, but now, it was even more expensive.

For someone like Quiyote who could wear such an item set right after becoming level 70, 5,000 gold wasn’t such a large amount. Even so, he couldn’t spend it as if it was nothing either.

‘You’re really going to spend that much?’

That was what his friends’ eyes were saying.

At their gaze, Quiyote added a condition.

“But only if you win!”

Only then did his friends relax.

‘That makes more sense.’

‘Right. 5,000 is just too much.’

At the same time, Hyrkan covered his mouth with his hand and lowered his head. Like Rodin’s The Thinker, Hyrkan seemed to be agonizing over something. Although it was weird his shoulders were jumping up and down, Quiyote and his friends didn’t put much meaning behind it.

Eventually, Hyrkan let out a sigh and gestured at Quiyote to come over.

Quiyote smiled.



‘The chance is finally here.’

Seeing the Armor Monkey Skeleton Warrior through the gap in his helmet, Quiyote gripped the sword in his hand tightly.

He was now level 71. Since he started Warlord, there wasn’t a single time he was troubled.

It was because he had money. As such, he could always have the best items for his level. Because he didn't work, he had plenty of time in his day to invest into Warlord.

Moreover, he really enjoyed games. He didn't hesitate to spend money. As a result, he was always among the best in online games.

However, it was different in Warlord. Although he hadn't run into any troubles, he wasn't famous either.

In other games, his name was known across the server or the entire game. Yet, in Warlord, he was just an average player without a nickname.

Although he had uploaded videos to YouTube before, it wasn't well accepted. Although he paid money to a firm to get his views up, that was it.

To him, Hyrkan was the most enticing prey.

'If I win against you, I can spread my name.'

Hyrkan was indeed a very enticing prey. He didn't have any background. Since he wasn't part of any guild, there wouldn't be any trouble afterwards. Plus, he traveled alone. He could be pushed over with sheer number. Even so, he was quite famous. Although it wasn't as much as Rankers, his speed or process of gaining fame was different than all the others.

If Quiyote defeated him, he would be able to gain some attention to himself.

Of course, the most important thing was whether Quiyote could defeat Hyrkan.

However, Quiyote was confident in this aspect.

‘First of all, I’m at least 10 levels higher.’

Kiyote was level 71. Although Hyrkan’s level was never announced to the public, Quiyote could tell that Hyrkan was undoubtedly in level 50s from his videos.

‘It looks like he got some decent items... but it can’t be better than mine.’

Quiyote had the White Mamba set. It came with one of the top bonus options available amongst level 70 item sets.

Finally, Quiyote was confident in his ability. He believed the only reason he hadn’t made a name for himself was because he was unlucky, not because he lacked the skill.

‘There’s no way I’d lose to him.’

But when the fight began, Quiyote couldn’t help but change his

mind.

The fight began without any warning, and a flashy battle broke out in an instant.

Quiyote was the first to attack. To get a taste of his opponent, Quiyote first attacked a Skeleton Warrior with a basic attack. The Skeleton Warrior dodged Quiyote's attack easily.

‘They were this good?’

He knew how well Hyrkan's Skeleton Warriors fought from his videos.

However, he was certain it was a result of expert editing and directing. With the right editing and directing, even an average player could look like experts.

After clashing with one personally, Quiyote realized he was wrong. The Skeleton Warrior's movements were much quicker and refined than he had expected.

It was thanks to Hyrkan's training.

As Hyrkan put all points from leveling up into strength, his Skeleton Warriors had long grown accustomed to such attacks. There was no way they would be hit by Quiyote's basic attacks.

In fact, they even counterattacked from time to time.

Clang!

The sound of the Skeleton Warrior's mace hitting Quiyote's armor rang out to the surrounding.

After being struck, Quiyote stepped backwards. Without chasing him, the Skeleton Warriors maintained their positions. Seeing the Skeleton Warriors actions, Quiyote lightly touched the left hip where he was just struck by the mace.

There was no physical damage. If he was injured with just that much, there would have been no point in spending so much money to buy the White Mamba set.

However, the mental damage was there.

‘This skeleton.’

Quiyote wanted to fight slowly and attacked to get a feel for his opponent. What answered him was humiliation.

‘Fine.’

Quiyote threw away his plan for a slow fight.

‘I’ll end this quick!’

It was in an instant.

In a situation where both sides had kept their distance of about 3 meters...

“Charge!”

Quiyote used his skill, Charge. He kicked the ground as he launched himself forward like a missile.

The distance between him and the Skeleton Warrior closed in an instant.

“Booster!”

Then, Quiyote followed up with a sword slash.

Charge and Booster.

It was the swordsman class players’ 18th combo. When this combo hit, its target would be defeated ten out of ten times.

It was the same for the Skeleton Warrior. Although it tried to dodge its opponent’s sudden attack by swaying its body backwards...

Crack!

Quiyote's sword reached the Skeleton Warrior first and cut his body. Although it avoided being split in half thanks to Bone Armor, it couldn't prevent its body from being pushed back like a puppet that has its strings cut. The Skeleton Warrior disappeared.

In other words, the obstacle between Hyrkan and Quiyote was now gone.

‘This is it!’

Quiyote didn't stop. With his Charge skill ready, he ran towards Hyrkan with full force.

Booster was off cooldown as well. If he could close the distance, it would be impossible for Hyrkan to dodge his sword. He could either get hit or block it. Regardless of which, the damage Hyrkan would take wouldn't be small.

Quiyote activated his skill, and Hyrkan responded to Quiyote's confident charge in a strange manner.

‘Huh?’

He lied face down on the ground.

‘What?’

Quiyote couldn't help but be taken aback seeing Hyrkan disappear from his line of sight.

What made him even more flustered was...

Smack!

That he tripped on Hyrkan's body and fell down.

Watching this from afar, Quiyote's friends couldn't help but frown.

‘No way.’

‘He stopped the Charge like that?’

The Charge skill made its user unable to control his body during the duration.

Because of it, accidents sometimes happened while using the Charge skill. In forests, players sometimes ran into trees. In caves, players sometimes ran into the wall. If one typed Charge Fails on YouTube, there were many funny videos to see.

However, dodging the Charge skill by lying face down on the

ground was... for lack of a better word, absurd.

But its effect was clear. After falling down, Quiyote rolled on the ground like a wheel. It would have been better to just fall and stop.

‘Kuu!’

As he rolled on the ground, so did the world around him. As a result, he felt slightly dizzy.

When Quiyote stopped and staggered himself up.

“Careful!”

The shout of his friends entered his ears. Quiyote turned towards the direction of the sound.

At that instant, Hyrkan stabbed his sword through the gap between Quiyote’s helmet and armor.

Crack!

Like threading a string through a needle-hole, Hyrkan’s sword dug through the smallest gap.

Thanks to the chainmail covering his skin, Quiyote was able to stop the sword from penetrating his neck.

However, the power of an all-strength necromancer wasn't something an inner-armor like a chainmail could block perfectly.

Hyrkan's sword pierced through the chainmail and damaged Quiyote.

It only went in about a finger deep. It wasn't a fatal blow at all.

However...

[You have fallen under the Slow Curse.]

[You have fallen under the Demon Curse.]

Curses affected Quiyote.

‘Shit!’

Realizing what had happened, Quiyote immediately tried to use his skill.

‘I need to use Shout...’

Level 60 swordsman skill, Shout!

It cleared the user's debuffs depending on his level and the skill's skill rank. Although the cooldown time was long, it was a useful

skill to use in an emergency situations.

It was easy to use as well.

Haaat!

He just had to shout clearly.

“Uuu...”

Quiyote wanted to shout...

‘Hm?’

But when he tried, the sky suddenly entered his eyes. His body was dropping backwards.

Hyrkan. Immediately after he stabbed with his sword, he tackled Quiyote’s body and threw him backwards. It didn’t take longer than a second for him to make his next move. To Quiyote who was on the receiving end, it felt like he was fighting against two Hyrkans. One who stabbed him and the other who tackled him.

Thud!

“Huk!”

What came out of his mouth wasn't a shout, but a sound of surprise.

The sword remained stabbed.

Then, Hyrkan sprinkled dirt between the gaps in Quiyote's helmet.

‘What?’

Those who had experienced PKs knew what it was like to have a sword trying to pierce one's eyes. But what about dirt? Surprisingly, not many had such an experience. Monsters, especially, never did such things.

Lack of experience led to panic, and it gave the opponent a chance.

2 seconds.

Hyrkan didn't waste the 2 seconds his opponent gave him.

Kwak!

Hyrkan stepped on Quiyote's chest to ensure he wouldn't get up easily. Then he pulled out the sword stuck on his neck and stabbed down again.

Stab, stab!

Every time Hyrkan stabbed with his sword, it went in deeper. If it went on for longer, Hyrkan's sword would go through Quiyote's neck and touch the ground.

'T-This is dangerous!'

With his life at risk, Quiyote struggled to live. He tossed and turned roughly. After throwing off Hyrkan's foot from his chest, he rolled to the side with all the strength he could muster.

After barely getting away from Hyrkan's grasp, Quiyote got up as quickly as he could.

"Hey! Behind you!"

His friends once again warned him. However, just like before, it was a little bit too late.

Clang!

Before Quiyote could even turn around and look, a mace struck him on the back. Like a ringing of a bell, a metallic ringing sounded as a Skeleton Warrior missing its left arm and half of its body swung its mace.

Quiyote staggered once again.

‘Shit, what’s...’

He was in a daze. He didn’t have the time to process what was happening. Even so, he narrowly opened his eyes to look for Hyrkan. That much showed that he was quite experienced in fighting.

However, his opponent was just better.

‘Where is he?’

Hyrkan had disappeared from his sight. He had, since long, gone into Quiyote’s blind spot. To avoid his line of sight, Hyrkan had lowered his body as he approached Quiyote.

Then, he tackled Quiyote again.

Thud!

Quiyote fell backwards. Then, Hyrkan once again...

Pat!

Threw dirt in his helmet. It was a much greater amount than before. Quiyote’s sight turned dark.

‘FUCK!’

Dejavu. No, it wasn’t a dejavu.

Clang!

This time, a Skeleton Warrior was there as well. The Skeleton Warrior happily smashed its mace down on Quiyote’s helmet.

Clang!

Every time the mace hit Quiyote’s helmet, the dirt inside the helmet swirled around it.

If there was hell, this would surely be it.

‘This is absurd!’

In the end, Quiyote couldn’t help but shout out.

“I, I surrender!”

With Quiyote’s surrender, Hyrkan snapped his fingers once. The Skeleton Warrior stopped. The tension died down, and a sense of emptiness came down on Quiyote.

In this sense of emptiness...

“Leave the 5,000 gold and your watch.”

Hyrkan threw out a few words.

Quiyote. This was his first conversation with Hyrkan.

Chapter 53. Lucky Drop (4)

The moment Quiyote announced his loss, he lay down on the ground face up like a corpse.

“Are you okay?”

“He’s completely out of it. Hey, Quiyote! Quiyote! Snap out of it! Don’t tell me you logged out?”

Quiyote’s friends were poking him, trying to console him while making fun of him at the same time.

Hyrkan watched them from an appropriate distance.

‘... doesn’t look like they’re going to attack me.’

Hyrkan wasn’t watching them because he didn’t have anything better to see.

Although people may issue a fair challenge at first, it wasn’t rare to change the moment they lost.

Hyrkan had experienced such happenings more than most people. Before returning to the past, his fame was closer to notoriety.

At the same time, Hyrkan’s battle style wasn’t exactly knightly. It

was dirty in a way, but the biggest reason it angered people was its overwhelming result. In a fight, it seemed appropriate for fighters to trade an arm for a wrist. However, it wasn't the case for Hyrkan. The way he overwhelmed his opponents gave his opponents a sense of hopelessness. Ones who thought they were good at fighting were devastated and put to place.

In any case, Quiyote and his friends didn't seem like they would go against their words.

That only meant one thing.

‘Time to get my pay.’

The 5,000 gold was for the winner, and the wristwatch was the right of the winner.

Once he received these, Hyrkan planned to leave without turning back. After all, he had received money to make up for his reason being there. Moreover, Hyrkan was quite interested in Quiyote's watch.

‘If that gives me a weapon, I can probably swim in meat for a few days.’

Quiyote's armor was the White Mamba set. However, it was of a different design than what the player Hyrkan met last time had. It was likely made by a different person. In any case, it was an expensive one. Although each of the White Mamba set items had

good options, its set effect was truly amazing. It was better than wearing a Unique item.

At this point, the most expensive items were those between level 70 and 90. Not only did players at these levels start playing from the beginning, but they were also the type to spend enormous amount of money on games. If not, unless they had the talent and ability like Hyrkan, it was impossible to enter the level range. Plus, because they could easily resell any items they are done using, the price on items had a lot of bubbles attached to it. Since they could sell it for almost the exact amount they had bought it for, there was no reason to not spend a large sum of money.

There was no way that someone wearing a White Mamba set, especially one that would agree on 5,000 gold for a duel, would have spared money on weapons.

If a weapon dropped from the watch, Hyrkan would truly have hit the jackpot!

No, it would be a jackpot even if he got any one of the White Mamba set.

‘This is why people have to live kindly.’

While Hyrkan was thinking some nonsense, Quiyote, who had remained speechless for a while, finally got up.

“You’re finally up. Idiot. Why would you call 5,000 gold for a

challenge fee?”

“What a waste. You should’ve gone to a club with that instead.”

His friends each gave him some words. Quiyote simply ignored them and walked towards Hyrkan. Hyrkan stared back at Quiyote through his Hahoe Mask with his guard down. Watching Hyrkan’s attitude, Quiyote took off his helmet. A handsome, blonde and blue-eyed man showed his face.

He looked at Hyrkan and spoke.

“Wow!”



‘Amazing.’

To Quiyote, his battle with Hyrkan was a nightmare. Everything he had thought of before the fight had gone to waste. He couldn’t do anything against the situation he was put under. Everything was outside of his expectations and outside of his imaginations. He was toyed with ruthlessly.

However, to Quiyote, his battle with Hyrkan felt newer than any fight he had ever had before.

It went past the level of new and reached the level of touching.

‘Yeah, this is a real fight!’

The duels Quiyote had until now was exchange of different skills to see who could deal more damage. That was it. It was something one could find in a simple console or PC game much less a VR game.

However, it was different with Hyrkan. In a virtual world that was as real as the real world, Hyrkan used every gap in his movement to attack.

This is what a real fight is like! Hyrkan seemed to be saying so.

Dirty? Cheap? In a war where lives were at risk, such words were flattery. It wasn't a game of sports. The goal wasn't to score more points than the opponent.

‘I want him as my teacher.’

In this sense, the battle with Hyrkan became a turning point for Quiyote. Quiyote felt like he finally opened his eyes. From the bottom of his heart, he wanted to learn to fight under Hyrkan.

On the other hand, Quiyote's pride didn't let him bow his head.

As such...

“I learned a lot. I’ll come to challenge you again one day.”

Quiyote took off the weapon he was wearing from his item slot and gave it to Hyrkan.

“This is the payment for this battle as well as the next.”

This sword was the single most expensive item in Quiyote’s possession.

Hyrkan stared at the weapon for a moment.

He had felt the matter became a bit more complex.

‘Hmm.’

He did want the weapon. However, by his calculation, it could be more profitable to receive 5,000 gold and the watch. After all, there was a chance the watch might drop the weapon. In that case, he would receive both the gold and weapon.

However, the situation wasn’t one where he could accept the latter.

A challenger who accepted his loss and promised a next time had a right to receive proper treatment.

Moreover, such an experience was extremely rare for Hyrkan. Most people who lost to him did not do as they promised, but cursed out in anger.

‘What an interesting guy.’

Hyrkan received the weapon and asked.

“Your name?”

“Quiyote. No, it’s Don Quiyote.”

Don Quiyote.

That was Quiyote’s full in-game name. He had misspelled Don Quixote as Don Quiyote during character creation. To hide his mistake, he introduced himself as Quiyote instead of Don Quiyote.

When Hyrkan heard his name.

‘Ah.’

Hyrkan remembered.

‘The Challenger Don Quiyote. This is him?’

The Challenger Don Quiyote.

While Hyrkan was making a name for himself as the Hero Slaughterer, although it wasn't as much as Hyrkan, there was another player that made his name known through PvP. Hyrkan never had the chance to meet him. Although his PvP skills were monstrous, he wasn't interested in making it his main focus. He only became renowned for his PvP skills because countless number of people picked fights with him.

'I didn't recognize him because his skills were too low.'

Hyrkan was slightly surprised. The Don Quiyote he knew was skilled enough to be called The Challenger. However, the one he faced this time was just average. If he won against someone at his level, it would only be because of his items.

Of course, he would become better as time went on. It wasn't rare for players to suddenly make great advancements through certain events. Perhaps, today's battle could even be that event.

Hyrkan smiled lightly.

Who would have thought I'd meet someone like him in such a way?

"Don Quiyote. I'll remember it."

'Life is funny, eh?'

At this instant, although it was only for an instant, Hyrkan thought Warlord was fun after a long time.



[Orc Hero's Sword]

* Main Properties:

- Rare-rank item
- Strength +66
- Stamina +66
- Required level: 60
- Required condition: Minimum of 350 strength

* Sub-properties:

- Increases strength proportional to level
- 9% chance to ignore all monster's defense
- 9% chance to ignore animal-type monster's defense

* Miscellaneous

- A sword used by a Blue Orc mutant, the Orc Hero. After slaughtering through countless number of enemies, it obtained a mystical power to see through the enemy's weakness.

‘Whoa.’

Immediately after Quiyote and his friends left, Hyrkan took off his mask and helmet, and checked the option of the sword he received. When he did, he couldn't stop himself from blinking in amazement.

‘The OH Sword? Isn’t this a Unique rank sword?’

Orc Hero’s Sword.

For swordsmen, especially strikers, it was known to be better than some Unique items.

‘The last time I checked... 15,000 gold, I think it was? I can sell it immediately for 13,000 at least.’

It was 15,000 gold in price.

Although its supply wasn’t too low, because of its popularity amongst level 60 swordsmen, it fetched a high price. As popular as it was, if one tried to sell it, he could do it within couple days. It was incomparable to the lion body suit he was still trying to sell.

Of course, there was no reason for Hyrkan to sell this item.

‘If it’s this, who cares about magic power or the like.’

Although weapons with magic power was ideal for Hyrkan, it was different if it was the Orc Hero’s Sword. Rather than summoning another skeleton with the extra magic power, it would be much better for Hyrkan to swing this sword himself.

‘To just give away something like this... just how rich is he?’

Hyrkan realized just how generous Quiyote was.

Of course, it was possible because it was a game. When two people got into an argument and fought in the real world, one person wouldn't say, 'I like you. Here's my Rolex Watch, let's fight again.'

If Hyrkan was in his position, he would never have done such a thing.

'Quite the romantic, isn't he?'

In a way, Hyrkan was envious. It wasn't just that he had money, but that he could play Warlord in such a way. The fact that he could purely enjoy the game made Hyrkan jealous.

To Hyrkan, Warlord was life. A way and means. Although there were times he enjoyed it, in the end, it was a tool for survival. Everything he did was for efficiency and result. Joy came afterwards.

Hyrkan closed his mouth.

'Making me all emotional...'

'Snap out of it, An Jaehyun. It's not the time to get all sentimental!'

After scolding himself, Hyrkan went back to his usual way of thinking.

‘This is enough.’

Although it wasn’t the lucky drop he was hoping for, it was one nonetheless. Furthermore, it gave Hyrkan confidence.

‘With this, once I become level 60, I can hunt Bulkas Mountain Range’s master, the Bear Warrior.’

Bulkas Mountain Range’s master, the level 80 boss monster, Bear Warrior.

It was a monstrous bear that walked on two legs, and carried a large sword that easily sent chills down the spine.

His original plan had been to hunt it at late level 60s or even level 70. However, now that he had the Orc Hero’s Sword, he could give it a try the moment he hit level 60.

‘Good.’

Hunting the Bear Warrior was the starting point.

‘I’ll hunt it, and officially begin the Immoral Prince scenario quest. It’s going to be the start of me taking everything for myself.’

The start of the second main scenario quest!

Hyrkan grinned.

‘It’s time to go find a useful weapon to use until level 60.’

With that, Hyrkan turned back.

“Why don’t I go hunt just one more pack of Sword Monkeys?”

Chapter 54. Maoong's Test (1)

[You have leveled up.]

Even with the level-up alert, Hyrkan did not stop. He weaved through the battles among his skeletons and Sword Monkeys, and slashed away at the monkey's bodies.

Hyrkan's longsword moved both elegantly and brutally as it left long slash marks and deep cuts. At times, he cut off the monkeys' limbs almost effortlessly.

Kii!

Every time Hyrkan's longsword moved, a Sword Monkey cried out in pain. It was only after all 12 Sword Monkeys were dead that Hyrkan finally stopped and checked his level-up alert.

Hyrkan half-heartedly examined his stat window. In truth, he didn't really have to. Considering he checked his stats quite often, there was no way he wouldn't know his stats. Hyrkan only recognized the fact that he had finally reached level 60. Afterwards, he quickly skinned the monkeys that were lying on the ground. It seemed Hyrkan was more concerned about the items than leveling up.

After Hyrkan skinned the monkeys, they began to melt down. Soon, only their bones and skin remained, and Hyrkan carefully examined through them.

“GOD DAMN IT!”

At that moment, Hyrkan shouted out in anger, and kicked the skull of a nearby Sword Monkey.

The Sword Monkey’s skull then flew towards an unassuming Skeleton Warrior that had been on standby.

Whish!

The Skeleton Warrior quickly dodged the flying skull. Then, it stared at Hyrkan as if to say ‘did I do well?’ After all, Hyrkan had always spent time teaching his Skeleton Warriors on how to dodge attacks.

However, Hyrkan didn’t have the peace of mind to praise the Skeleton Warrior.

“Arrrrrgh!”

In the end, he exploded.

“Why can’t you just give me one? I’ve killed over a thousand! WHY? What did I do wrong? Tell me Tobot Soft! What did I do wrong here!?”

To get to level 60 in the shortest amount of time, Hyrkan had

given up on hunting Sword Monkeys. However, he could not get rid of his lingering attachment. In the end, he came back when he was level 59 with only about 20% EXP left to go until level 60.

Let's try killing them until I get to level 60!

At this point, it would not have mattered even if a Sword Monkey Jewel dropped. He already had a weapon prepared for level 60. However, he did it anyways just to resolve the occasionally tickling he felt in his heart.

However...

‘This is a bug for sure. This god damned game...’

The result wasn't what he had hoped for.

Grrrr

The forest shook at the sound of Hyrkan gnashing his teeth. Although there were many times Hyrkan was frustrated or driven close to madness by Warlord, this was the first time he was completely toyed with.

“Whew.”

Of course, there wasn't much he could do in such a situation. He couldn't go ask Tobot Soft why his item wasn't dropping lest he get treated as a hacker of some sort.

He had no choice but to endure through it.

Huff huff.

Hyrkan let out breaths of air to calm his anger.

What really made Hyrkan cool down was...

Whish!

His Skeleton Warriors turning their heads around. At their reaction, Hyrkan put up his guard and turned around as well.

‘Is it an ambush?’

What Hyrkan caught sight of was a heavily armored player running towards Hyrkan without reserve. When the player saw Hyrkan, he stopped in his tracks.

“Everyone halt!”

At the same time that he stopped running, he shouted.

“Player! It’s a player, not a monster!”

His shout was directed at his comrades following behind him. After shouting at them, the player stared back at Hyrkan and lightly bowed.

“Sorry about that. I thought you were a monster.”

It seemed like he confused Hyrkan’s summoned skeletons as monsters. As for Hyrkan, it wasn’t a particularly special experience.

“It’s fine.”

Hearing Hyrkan, the player nodded. Meanwhile, the player’s comrades had made their appearance. Two magicians, two priests, and another swordsman. It was a 6-man party, and they showed great interest as soon as they watched Hyrkan and his Skeleton Warriors.

“Could this be him?”

“Hahoe Mask Hyrkan? Sure looks like it.”

Among those 6, two knew who Hyrkan was.

“There was a rumor he was hunting in the Bulkas Mountain Range. Looks like it was real... his battle videos are absolutely amazing.”

“Who’s that? Is he that famous?”

Of course, there were some who didn’t know who he was.

“He’s pretty well known on YouTube. You should look him up. You’ll be blown away.”

“Really? How come I’ve never heard of him before?”

“What do you think? All you ever watch on YouTube are cam girls.”

It was like they were looking at a monkey in the zoo.

Hyrkan wasn’t particularly bothered by it. He was prepared for something like this considering that he was making money

through YouTube. In fact, he was rather thankful that they didn't seem to hold any hostile intentions. In Warlord, most attentions were hostile than friendly.

The swordsman player rounded up his noisy allies.

“Enough. Let's get a move on!”

At the same time, the swordsman looked back at Hyrkan in good manners.

“Sorry for bothering you. I wish you lucky drops.”

‘Fu...’

Hyrkan barely stopped himself from losing his temper. Although the player said it without any ill intent, he couldn't help but be angry. It seemed like the Sword Monkeys might have given him anger management issues.

However, he hadn't lost all his rationality that he'd yell at a player he met for the first time.

Hyrkan opened his mouth and slowly let out some words.

“Yeah... good luck to you too.”

Once their goodbyes were made, both sides went on their ways without any trouble. There wasn't any reason for one. Not many players were actively seeking to vent their frustration on other players. After all, Warlord didn't have shortage of targets to do exactly that.

‘Whew.’

At the same time, Hyrkan could tell through his own skin that quite a long time had passed.

‘It's been 27 days, so I guess it's not that surprising that I'd run into other players.’

It took Hyrkan 27 days to get from level 50 to 60. Although he wasn't sure, he believed it to be close to a new record. He knew it generally took at least 30 days to get from level 50 to 60. This was for the Rankers that were currently in the Top 100 Rankings. But Hyrkan had done so 27 days, at least 3 less than the Rankers. Hyrkan's level-up speed wouldn't lose out to the current number one player, the First One.

At the same time, it also meant a month had passed since Hyrkan first stepped into the Bulkas Mountain Range.

Although the Bulkas Mountain Range was a hunting ground nobody knew about one month ago, it was now known to a certain extent that Bulkas Mountain Range was full of sweet honey and dew. Not only average players, but quite well-known guilds were claiming their territories to begin serious hunting laps.

‘It’s not the time to vent my frustration at some Sword Monkeys.’

Once a bit more time passed, even more players would arrive. In other words, there would be more competitors.

‘I better hurry.’

Taking care of things when there was no competition was the basics of a quick game play.

‘Bulkas Ranger’s Friend, Bulkas Mountain Range’s Cleaner. I now have the minimum requirements to receive the quest.’

Moreover, what Hyrkan would be aiming for from here on was something that couldn’t help but have countless competitors.

‘This should be enough for me to get the Immoral Prince quest from Maoong, right?’

The Immoral Prince.

He was the Corrupt Count’s backer, and at the same time, a prince who was trying to usurp the throne with the Power of Corruption. He was the protagonist of Warlord’s second main scenario quest.

It was Bulkas Ranger's Captain, Maoong, who knew his identity.

Hence, this was where the second main scenario began.

Currently, Maoong recognized the strange, recent changes in the Bulkas Mountain Range, and although he suspected the Immoral Prince, he didn't tell anyone about it. Telling others of a prince trying to usurp the throne through Power of Corruption was simply too absurd a tale to tell anyone else.

Because of this, one had to complete several quests from the Bulkas Rangers and possess at least 2 titles related to the Bulkas Rangers to get this quest from Maoong.

As for Hyrkan, he had completed 22 Bulkas Ranger quests and received the Bulkas Ranger's Friend, and killed over 1,000 monsters in the Bulkas Mountain Ranger and received the Bulkas Mountain Ranger's Cleaner title.

Now, all he had to do was visit Maoong and he would be treated in a completely different way than before.

Then, to further test Hyrkan, Maoong would request Hyrkan to kill the Bear Warrior, who was recognized as the master of the Bulkas Mountain Range. The moment he passed this test, Hyrkan would officially enter the Immoral Prince main scenario quest.

'Alright, after making my preparations, I'll head out immediately.'

After resolving himself, Hyrkan turned his head.

Suddenly...

Thwack!

Hyrkan once again kicked the skull of a Sword Monkey lying on the ground.

“ARGH!”

Although he had resolved himself, his anger had yet to die down.



[Your conversion request has been completed.]

After checking the content of the text message, An Jaehyun checked the gold count of his Warlord character, Hyrkan. The number 13,598 reflected onto An Jaehyun’s thick glasses.

‘I sure gathered a lot in just a month.’

13,000 gold.

It was quite a large sum. In real life currency, it would be worth 13,000,000 won. The money was the result of Hyrkan's month-long hunting, quest rewards, and YouTube revenue. The money also included the price of items he sold after he had finished using them. It wasn't that he really made over 10,000,000 won in one month.

Even so, it was something to be impressed with. Starting out from the bottom, even going as far as borrowing money from private loaners, he had come far enough to make 10,000,000 won through gaming. It was enough to make him proudly tell his family and relatives what he did for a living. There would be no problem with him telling them 'I just stay in-doors 12 hours a day to play games.' After all, who would criticize him with the money he makes?

However, even considering how well he was doing, An Jaehyun was still spending most of his days hungry.

'Excluding the minimum living expenses, this is all I have, huh?'

He was currently saving up even a single 100 won coin if he could.

'That means I have to cover what I lack with just this.'

Currently, An Jaehyun's character, Hyrkan, had several holes that couldn't entirely be covered no matter how much he invested into it.

The item setting was fine for now. The Pursuer of Corruption Necklace and Ring was phenomenal to the point he could use it when he was over level 100. His Skeleton Snake set and Orc Hero's Sword was also something he could use when he was level 70.

The problem was with his skills.

‘The skills I need to buy are...’

His summoning tree was fine. He had gotten a free skill every 10 levels, and had even acquired the rare skills [Skeleton Science] and [Madness Helm].

However, looking at his curse skill tree and body modification skill tree as actual trees, they had yet to grow even a single branch.

All he had for curses were the Demon Curse and Slow Curse, and Skin Sewing was the only skill he had for the body modification tree. He didn't learn any skills above that.

Of course, it wasn't that he didn't want to. He simply couldn't.

Why? It was too expensive.

Thankfully, An Jaehyun knew what he needed the most currently.

‘I need to learn Corrosive Ghost for sure.’

Demon Curse's higher-tier skill, [Corrosive Ghost]. He lowered the target's defense by corroding its armor. It was one of the core skills of curse magicians. The current market price for the skillbook was 1,000 gold.

‘That means I also need Blind.’

Corrosive Ghost's higher-tier skill, [Blind]. As one might expect, it turned the target's vision into complete darkness. It was also a core skill for curse magicians, and one that was especially useful for PKs. Since he would have to fight many players from now on, it was a skill Hyrkan definitely needed. Its skillbook was also 1,000 gold.

‘There's not much choice with body modification since I'll have to learn Leg Strength Modification before I can learn anything else...’

Body modification's introductory skill, [Leg Strength Modification]. It was a passive skill that raise movement speed and jump power. It provided mobility and survivability to magicians who were lacking in strength stat. Its skillbook cost 1,500 gold.

‘It'd be great if I can get the False Heart skill on top of it too.’

Rare-rank body modification skill, [False Heart]. It was a passive skill that raised stamina. It cost 1,500 as well.

The reason Leg Strength Modification and False Heart was expensive was because it greatly helped black magicians who lacked mobility and stamina. It was a skill all black magicians sought, not just necromancers. Although the demand was high, the supply was small. It was easy to tell why it cost what it did.

These were the skillbooks An Jaehyun wanted. The four of these cost 5,000 gold in total.

Thinking of that number, An Jaehyun made a blank expression.

‘I know Warlord is full of bubbles but 5,000,000 won to learn 4 skills is a bit...’

Too much.

‘It sure is a crazy game. I mean, I should’ve known. People even put their houses up for collateral to get the money to play this game...’

An Jaehyun realized just how expensive a game he was playing.

“Whew.”

Of course, he didn’t agonize over it for long. He knew what he had to do. For his growth and future, they were undoubtedly necessary. There was no reason to hesitate.

In fact, what really was on An Jaehyun's mind was how to spend the rest of the gold.

‘I'll have 8,000 gold after getting the skillbooks. After buying consumables, what should I do with the rest?’

The way to make the most out of his money. That was what filled An Jaehyun's mind at the moment.

Soon...

Growl!

An Jaehyun's stomach let out a growl, unable to hold in its hunger.

‘Is it time to eat already? Time sure flies.’

An Jaehyun got up from his seat.

‘Let's see. Why don't I make some steamed egg? If I put some hams... wait, no. Hams are too expensive. I guess I'll just do without.’

Even though he spent millions of won on his game character, An Jaehyun was stingy when it came to his stomach.

Chapter 55. Maoong's Test (2)

Warlord's main scenario quests were like stepping stones. Once one stepped on one, there was bound to be a next one. It was just that it was hard to bridge the gap between the two stones.

As such, the most important thing in main scenario quests was to step on the first stone. If this came too late, the whole quest progression would be slowed. It was obvious, since a slow start could only mean a late finish.

“Hyrkan, I thank you for the peace and stability you have helped us obtain. It is because of this that I entrust you with this mission.”

Thus, the first step Hyrkan just made was incomparable to anything else.

“Since I started working as Bulkas Mountain Range's Ranger, I've fought with monsters countless times to complete the mission given to me. Recently, there has been a rise in number of monsters that know how to use weapons.”

Maoong.

His well-groomed beard coupled with his large build made him look like Santa Claus to Hyrkan.

With no way of knowing what Hyrkan was thinking, Maoong continued on with his serious speech.

“Unless those monsters suddenly grew talent for making weapons, they must have gotten them from somewhere. While we were looking into the cause of it, we discovered a suspicious place. I would like you to investigate this place.”

“I don’t understand. Won’t the Bulkas Rangers be better suited than me for such a task?”

“There’s a reason behind it. Of course, I don’t want to force you to do anything. You are our, the Bulkas Rangers’ friend, not my subordinate. The choice is yours. How about it?”

When Hyrkan heard what he wanted to hear from Maoong, he didn’t say no.

“I’ve always seen the Bulkas Rangers in respect and I’ve always been thankful of them for their effort in keeping everyone safe. If you are entrusting me with a task, I would of course accept it,”

[The quest, ‘Maoong’s Test’, begins.]

‘It’s finally here.’

Hyrkan yelled in delight. Just to himself of course. He didn’t have any intention of making the same mistake as he did with Ahimbree.

Maoong took something out from his sleeve and handed it over to Hyrkan. Hyrkan carefully accepted it, as Maoong immediately told him what it was.

“It’s a map.”

What he received was a map of the Bulkas Mountain Range drawn on a piece of leather.

‘Oh yeah!’

To Hyrkan, it was no different than a treasure map.



[Maoong’s Test]

- Quest Rank: Unique
- Required level: None
- Quest content: Bulkas Ranger’s captain, Maoong, has given you this mission. This mission is a test to prove your ability.
- Quest reward: From Maoong’s collection.

A Unique-rank quest.

‘This is 100% the real thing.’

It was a sure tell sign that it was a main scenario quest. As soon as he saw the rank, he nodded his head. To an extent, he was certain that Maoong’s Test was the starting point of the main scenario quest. When he saw the quest rank, his 99% confidence level turned into 100%.

Then, Hyrkan’s eyes naturally fell to the word ‘collection.’

‘Collection... what could it be?’

He knew how the Immoral Prince quest would work out. Even so, there was no way for him to know every little detail of each quest. Even if he knew the big rewards, he didn’t have the brain power necessary to remember every single quest reward along the quest line.

Of course, he knew it wouldn’t be anything small. For example, there was no way a Unique rank quest would just give 100 gold as reward.

‘If it’s a Chronicle Unique, I’ll fly to Japan and get some Wagyu beef. Mark my words.’

Chronicle Unique would be more than what he could ask for.

No matter what it was, Hyrkan probably wouldn't be disappointed.

‘Even if it isn't, there's no problem. Just killing the Bear Warrior should give me about a thousand gold.’

Bear Warrior.

Although it wasn't anywhere on the quest content Maoong gave him, Hyrkan knew it would be the monster he had to kill.

Its level was 80.

It was 4 meters tall, rather small compared to what one might imagine. It walked on its two hind legs instead of on fours. In fact, it was even equipped with armor and helmet, and held a sword and shield on each of its hands.

It even had special battle abilities similar to a swordsman's Charge and Shout.

‘Let's see. I'll get at least two Bear Warrior set items from it...’

As hard to kill as it was, the reward it gave was definite. Boss monsters dropped more items than normal. What was worth the most was the Bear Warrior set, a level 70 Rare rank item set. Its options were quite good. Moreover, killing a single Bear Warrior guaranteed enough crafting jewels to craft at least one Rare item. If one was lucky, he would get enough to make 3.

‘I know this won’t happen, but if it doesn’t drop any crafting jewels like that piece of shit monkey, I’m going to sue Tobot Soft.’

Plus, its bones, skins, and weapon fragments were used to make Normal rank level 70 items. This also gave quite a bit of money. At this point, a level 70 Normal rank item would go for at least 100 gold. Although the Bear Warrior didn’t drop as many coins since it was a mid-small sized monster, it still dropped enough to make 10 items.

Of course, the real deal was the raid video.

A Bear Warrior hunting guide had not yet been made. Bear Warrior wasn’t a boss monster that one could randomly run into in the field. It was a monster that required the Bulkas Ranger quest progression to meet. The first video of any boss raid practically had 1,000,000 views guaranteed, even for a no-name. For someone like Hyrkan who was already well-known, it could become his new most viewed video.

All in all, Hyrkan would not have to worry about losing out by killing the Bear Warrior.

As long as he could succeed in killing it, he wouldn’t have to worry about money.

On the other hand, if he failed to kill it, it would have a big impact on Hyrkan.

‘As long as I don’t make any mistakes, there’s no way I’ll fail.’

Hyrkan made a bitter smile.

‘Though, I’m not sure how well not making any mistakes would go.’



While Hyrkan was on his way after leaving the Bulkas Ranger Village, he noticed them.

‘Just my luck.’

There were hyenas on his trail. They weren’t there from the start. They had started following him sometime after he left the village. Once they caught sight of Hyrkan, they began to stealthily follow him.

‘I’m not wearing my hahoe mask, yet they’re following me... they don’t look like they know who I am though.’

There was no way they knew who he was. Currently, Hyrkan wasn’t wearing his Skeleton Snake set and hahoe mask, but a run-of-the-mill magician robe.

It was a disguise.

The fact that Hahoe Mask Hyrkan was currently active in the Bulkas Mountain Range was a fact anyone could learn by just googling ‘Hyrkan’ and ‘Bulkas.’ It was Hyrkan who uploaded the hunting guide on Bulkas Mountain Range’s Sword Monkeys after all.

Hyrkan wasn’t an idiot, and there was no way he wouldn’t disguise himself unless the situation called for it. Although he had been treated as a pushover because of it on several occasions, it was better than being targeted after being known as the Hahoe Mask Hyrkan.

In any case, the fact that they were chasing him meant they were after a player walking about alone in the Bulkas Mountain Range. It wasn’t the first time Hyrkan was in such a situation.

‘What should I do?’

If it was any time else, he would only make a move after the other side made their move first. However, he was currently on an extremely important quest.

It was different from the usual circumstance.

As such, it was time to do things a bit differently.

‘I need to take care of them somehow.’

No matter what, he had no intention of going to the Bear Warrior's place with his tail still being bitten.

Hyrkan first turned and headed off to another direction. He began to move so it was hard for his pursuers to follow him, and he purposely passed by monsters to make it difficult for them to stealthily chase after him. Because of it, they came out of hiding and began to openly chase after him.

When they made their appearance, Hyrkan stopped, and his pursuers then stopped as well.

“I don't think we've met before. Do you need something?”

Hyrkan was the first to talk. However, no one gave him a reply. All three people staring at him maintained their silence. Meanwhile, Hyrkan examined them carefully.

‘Three swordsmen. Average items and classic style weapons. They don't seem to be anything special.’

After coming to his conclusion, he asked again.

“If our destination is the same, you guys can go on ahead. No need to gain suspicion by being all sneaky.”

At Hyrkan's words, they still did not respond. They only talked quietly among themselves.

‘What should we do?’

‘What should we say?’

Because of the silent surrounding, Hyrkan could faintly hear what they were talking about, and he couldn’t help but smile.

‘They’re complete amateurs.’

Here, Hyrkan made his move.

“Warlord sure is full of trash. Don’t they have anything better to do with their money? Why don’t they use that money to donate to a political campaign or something? If they have so much to spare, just use it to wipe your dirty asses.”

Although he was only talking to himself, each word was spoken loud and clear.

It was a provocation.

And their reaction...

“What? What did you just say?”

“We were just going to let wait and see, but you’re asking for it.”

“Ha. Looks like you don’t know who we are. I’ll rip that mouth right out of you.”

Was exactly what Hyrkan wanted.

‘Heh, it’s been a while since I’ve gotten a reaction like this.’

The moment Hyrkan saw their reaction, he could be 100% certain of one thing.

They weren’t from a proper guild or party affiliation. Even the Top 30 Guilds didn’t hesitate to tail someone and take whatever information they had. In fact, they were quite good at it. Because they were, they knew how to deal with situations like these. They either ran, negotiated, or killed. In any case, they knew exactly what to do.

One thing they didn’t do... was being provoked so easily and say something like ‘do you know who my father is?’ Those who did would quickly be abandoned by their guild.

That could only mean they were from a mediocre guild.

‘Since they’re here, they probably aren’t complete trash. They should at least have played for a long time.’

Hyrkan didn’t need to think for long. Since they were from a

mediocre guild, there was nothing to worry about.

Especially when he was facing idiots who were so quickly provoked.

“I don’t want to know who you are, but considering that’s all you can say in a 3 on 1 situation, you must know you’re a bunch of losers. Ah, let me ask you one thing. You didn’t forget to wear your adult diapers before logging in, right?”

“What?”

“What do you mean, ‘what’? I’m saying you’re going to end up shitting yourselves in fear by the time I’m done with you. You better brace yourselves for when you log out.”

He just had to provoke them a little more.

‘Was it too childish?’

With a pretty laughable provocation, Hyrkan began to fiddle with his watch. In an instant, he was prepared to change his items.

‘... on second thought, the diaper thing was probably too much. They can’t be that stupid to fall for something so childish...’

Of course, Hyrkan was pleasantly proven wrong.

“Fuck it, let’s just kill him.”

“You don’t know what he’s got up in his sleeve though.”

“Who cares? It looks like he was avoiding us for a while anyways. Let’s just kill him.”

After a bit of whispering among themselves, they introduced themselves.

“You fucker, you’ll pay for messing with the Apollo Guild!”

Apollo Guild!

The moment Hyrkan heard those two words, he reflexively charged at them like a 100-meter dash runner.

“Slot On!”

It wasn’t until a bit later that Hyrkan began to reminisce about the Apollo Guild.

Chapter 56. Maoong's Test (3)

Hyrkan's body became covered in black liquid as he charged out. It seemed the black liquid was unable to withstand Hyrkan's speed, as it fell off of his body. When the black liquid completely disappeared, Hyrkan's Skeleton Armor could be seen.

Hyrkan took something out and threw it on the ground. Then, he pulled out his sword from the sheath hung by his left hip.

Chwing!

With a strong, metallic sound, Hyrkan's longsword made its appearance. Hyrkan held this seemingly inexpensive sword with both hands.

'Left.'

Already in position to attack, the one Hyrkan was aiming for was the left most player among the three.

His name was Wang Jiang.

Of course, it wasn't a name Hyrkan would remember. What was important to Hyrkan were the gaps in his armor and helmet. Hyrkan swung his sword horizontally at these gaps like a baseball player.

Whish!

His sword cut through the air.

Crash!

It penetrated the gap and made a rough sound. Hyrkan's ability to stab the small gaps in armor was more of an art than technique. It was clean and beautiful.

‘Kuk!’

Of course, for the one on the receiving end, it was like a fierce, unavoidable natural disaster.

After suddenly being struck on the neck, he couldn't even let out a breath of air.

Hyrkan didn't stop there. He continued on like a bulldozer.

“Eh?”

“Huh?”

The two remaining players watched their ally suddenly disappear. They were unable to respond in the slightest, and stared at Hyrkan knock down their ally.

While they were staring dumbfounded...

Clack clack!

The four Skeleton Fragment Hyrkan threw while charging forward quickly sprouted forth four imposing figures.

2-meter-tall, black Skeleton Warriors with large shoulder bones. Fangs shooting up from their lower mouth clearly showed that they were made using Black Orcs as material.

The Skeleton Warriors didn't hesitate in the slightest as they made their move. In an instant, they charged at the two players staring at Hyrkan.

“What?”

“Eh?”

By the time they noticed the eerie sound coming from behind them, it was too late. The sight of four Skeleton Warriors charging at them caught them completely off guard, and they were unable to react properly.

Crash!

A head for one.

Crack!

The stomach for the other.

Clang!

They shook as they were hit on their head and stomach respectively.

More attacks poured forth as they were shaking.

“Shit! Hey!”

“I know!”

Although they tried to counterattack by pulling out and swinging their sword, as they were completely off balance, their attacks were nothing more than pointless flailing. The Skeleton Warriors were too good to be hit by such attacks. The Skeleton Warriors dodged the attacks with ease and counterattacked.

“Kuk!”

With a short and rough cry, one of the two players fell. His fate was gruesome to say the least, as the Skeleton Warriors hacked away at him as if they were cutting firewood.

“Are you okay?”

Although the one remaining player shouted towards his ally, he wasn't in any better position.

Meanwhile, Hyrkan summoned his Golem.

Kugugu!

The Golem rose from the ground and became a wall that split the battle in half.

“Fuck!”

At the same time, the one who Hyrkan had sent flying to begin the fight finally got up as he cursed. However, what greeted his line of sight was Hyrkan's sword tip.

Stab!

“Uk!”

Hyrkan's sword penetrated the gap in his helmet with precision, and instantly took away his vision.

“What?”

For the one on the receiving end, it felt like the light had suddenly gone off. Hyrkan simply put Wang Jiang back down on the ground with a kick.

“Whoop!”

Hyrkan pushed down on his chest with his foot, pulled out the sword still stuck in his face, then stabbed it again.

Stab, stab.

An indescribable bone-chilling sound rang out.

Although Wang Jiang struggled, because Hyrkan’s strength stat was higher than his, Wang Jiang was unable throw off Hyrkan’s foot.

“Fuck! Do you know who we are? You won’t get away with this!”

In the end, all he could do was talk. Hyrkan seemed unfazed by his childish threat as he continued to stab his eyes with his sword.

“Stop! Stop!”

Wang Jiang cried out.

It was something he could say only because he couldn't see what was happening to him. If he could, he would undoubtedly piss his pants.

As they said, ignorance is bliss.

“I'm from the Apollo Guild!”

At his continued childish threat, Hyrkan stopped his sword for the first time.

“Apollo Guild?”

“Yeah, that's right! You're fucked! We'll kill you over and over again until you quit the game for good!”

At this, Hyrkan couldn't help but smirk. Then, he continued his sword work.

“You fucker, I said stop!”

Wang Jiang shouted out once again. However, his cries didn't enter Hyrkan's ears.

Hyrkan began to reminisce.

‘What do they call this there? Karma?’

The image of a chubby, squinty-eyed man popped up in Hyrkan's head.

‘I didn't think I'd be tangled up with him again.’

The man he was thinking of was none other than the Apollo Guild's guild master, Apollo.

He was the son of a rich Chinese tycoon, and lived luxuriously his whole life because of it. Unsurprisingly, he poured huge amounts of money into Warlord to enjoy the same luxurious life, and he formed the Apollo Guild to leech off the guild members.

Although the Apollo Guild wasn't as powerful or influential as the Top 30 Guilds, it still had better management and stronger influence than most other guilds. Their play style was dirty to say the least, as they pressured low level players with their numbers, items, and levels. Although they didn't regularly PK or monster steal, they didn't hesitate to do so if they thought they could get away with it. They were the type who pressured the weak and were servile to the strong.

‘He was quite a funny guy.’

The Apollo Guild and Hyrkan met before a certain boss raid.

Hyrkan and the Hahoe Mask Guild had waited a long time for their turn in a boss raid. But when their turn had come, the Apollo

Guild interjected, saying that it was their turn. The whole situation was absurd for the Hahoe Mask Guild, but Apollo Guild's guild master said they should decide who gets to go through a fight between representatives from each guild. His plan was to crush the Hahoe Mask's representative and claim the boss raid.

Of course, Hyrkan had easily crushed their hopes.

In their fight, Hyrkan instantly cut off Apollo's wrist, but it didn't just end there. The Apollo Guild couldn't accept their loss and began to fight with the Hahoe Mask Guild. 30 vs 18. Although the Hahoe Mask Guild was outnumbered, the Hahoe Mask Guild had an overwhelming victory with Hyrkan killing 10 of Apollo Guild's members. The Apollo Guild didn't give up afterwards. They hired mercenaries and tried to get revenge. Of course, Hyrkan easily crushed them too. Then, one day, while Hyrkan was going somewhere alone, he was suddenly attacked by Apollo and his men. Hyrkan was able to win that fight as well, and in the end, the Hahoe Mask Guild released a statement on Apollo Guild's behavior, and they were reimbursed along with an official apology.

'I remember Kim Dongsoo and I ate a 200,000 won dinner with a Rothschild wine. That foie gras was so good...'

Hyrkan had thought that was the end of his relationship with the Apollo Guild. One day, however, Hyrkan ran into Apollo Guild members sexually harassing weaker players and took care of them. This incident spread, and the Apollo Guild became ___ overnight. That was the last time Hyrkan had heard of the Apollo Guild. After that, the Hahoe Mask Guild grew immensely, and became a guild the Apollo Guild couldn't mess with.

‘Come to think of it, the amount of items I stole from Apollo was... whew.’

In any case, the profit the Hahoe Mask Guild made from the Apollo Guild greatly helped them grow as a guild. Apollo was the type to have his entire item slots filled with expensive items, and every time Hyrkan killed him, he made at least 10,000 gold from his watch. Hyrkan made good use of Apollo’s items and later sold them off.

To Hyrkan, Apollo looked like an angel. Maybe even an arch-angel.

“You fucker.”

That was the end of Hyrkan’s reminiscence.

“We are going to chase you to the ends of the earth. You’re going to regret ever playing this game.”

Wang Jiang was still pouring curses after curses. Watching this, Hyrkan was a little bit impressed.

‘You still haven’t logged out? How tenacious.’

Most people chose to log out in such a situation. No one wanted to wait around to get logged out forcefully, especially since they

had to watch themselves being killed powerlessly.

Wang Jiang, however, flapped his mouth endlessly.

‘He’s going to die with just a couple more stabs.’

Hyrkan knew Wang Jiang had very little HP left, probably about 10% or so. He would die sooner or later.

“Hey.”

Hyrkan stopped his attacks.

“You said you were from the Apollo Guild, right?”

“Heh, you messed with the wrong guy.”

“Your guild master is Apollo right?”

“As long as you’re not part of the Top 30 Guilds, you better make a new character.”

Hearing this, Hyrkan grinned and took his foot off Wang Jiang’s chest. Free to move once again, Wang Jiang twitched his body. Meanwhile, Hyrkan moved his sword near Wang Jiang’s lower body.

“Huh?”

Wang Jiang, who was preparing to get up and put up a final struggle, instantly froze in place.

“You, what do you think you’re...”

Chwing!

Hyrkan slashed at Wang Jiang’s private area. The armor protecting the area was fine. Although there was a little dent, Wang Jiang couldn’t have received any damage.

“Uhuk!”

However, it was the most terrifying, powerful attack Wang Jiang had ever received.



When Hyrkan turned around after finishing off Wang Jiang, four lined-up Skeleton Warriors greeted him. Watching them, Hyrkan smiled.

‘My cute babies.’

Hyrkan was more than satisfied by their performance.

‘These guys are even weaker than I thought. They’re probably somewhere around mid-level 60s.’

Of course, the current outcome wasn’t just a result of Skeleton Warriors’ performance. The three guys from the Apollo Guild were just too weak. Their items were mostly normal rank, with only their weapon and top being rare rank.

On the other hand, Hyrkan had an incredible weapon to use against players.

The Orc Hero’s Sword.

In Warlord, players were also counted as animal-type. Its power in PvP was also why the Orc Hero’s Sword was so popular. Since the Orc Hero’s Sword’s option also applied to Skeleton Warriors, the outcome was only expected. Not to mention, there were no magicians or priests, and they had no time to self-buff either. If they had at least one priest, they wouldn’t have been crushed so easily.

In other words...

‘Considering their items, levels, or skill, there’s no way they made it up here by themselves. The rest of them must be here as well, and they were probably the scouts. The Bulkas Mountain Range should be a good hunting ground for the Apollo Guild.’

The Apollo Guild was likely in the Bulkas Mountain Range. Since the Bulkas Mountain Range was a good hunting ground, it wouldn't be strange if an entire guild had moved to group hunt.

‘Well, I’ll be done once I kill the Bear Warrior, so it probably won’t be a problem. It never hurts to be careful though. It’s going to be troublesome if I run into them now.’

Although he wasn’t afraid of the Apollo Guild, Hyrkan wasn’t so bold as to fight them head on.

Not to mention, they weren’t what he should be focusing on. Hyrkan turned around. It was time to get back to his original goal. Hyrkan collected the Skeleton Warriors and the Golem, then started walking towards his original destination.

Then...

“Ah right, the watches!”

Hyrkan quickly turned back and grabbed the watches. His steps were lighter than usual like someone who stopped at a rest stop to get something to eat.



There was a bar located at the Bulkas Ranger Village famous for its delicious meat and drink. It was a must-visit place for anyone visiting the Bulkas Ranger Village. As one might expect, it was

currently filled with people, especially due to Bulkas Mountain Range's rise in popularity.

What was surprising was that there was a group filling up the entire bar as if they had paid to borrow the whole thing. Even more surprising was that there was only one person sitting even though there were plenty of chairs and tables around.

“So you're saying he went after you even after knowing that you were from the Apollo Guild?”

The only man seated was wearing a memorable item. An armor made of reddish black scales. It was the Crimson Crocodile set, rumored to be one of the most expensive sets in Warlord. In fact, it wasn't something one could get his hands on with just money, as one needed connections with the designer and the material provider.

However, the Crimson Crocodile set was currently looking rather... silly. It changed to fit the body of its user, and thus looked as if it would rip apart at any time. That was how fat the man wearing it was. He looked like the mascot of Michelin Automotive Tires.

“Yes, sir. Even though Wang Jiang warned him many times, he apparently did not stop.”

Around the fat man stood five players wearing stern expressions.

They were the executives of the Apollo Guild, which had over 100 members averaging level 60.

“What about his face?”

“They took a video, but it is unclear because of the anti-facial recognition program.”

The Apollo Guild had entered the Bulkas Mountain Range just one day ago, and they had sent Wang Jiang and the others on a scouting mission.

But before they could properly do their job, they ran into trouble. Not only did this trouble get in the way of the Apollo Guild, but it went so far as to attack its members.

After hearing this, Apollo had gathered the guild’s executives to plan how to get back at him.

“They’ve seen them though, right?”

“Well... they said everything happened too quickly.”

“What was he wearing?”

“They said they caught a glimpse of a skeleton armor, but they’re unable to describe it clearly.”

“Three guys got taken out by just one person. How can they not remember his face or clothes?”

“It happened so quick, so...”

Of course, it didn't seem like things would be that easy.

Listening to the executive's explanation, Apollo frowned, making him even uglier.

“Whatever, just get him. Kill anyone that gets in the way. We'll make an example out of him to show what happens to someone who touches the Apollo Guild.”

At Apollo's words, the executives bowed as they sighed on the inside.

Other players watching this scene clicked their tongue.

‘Film a movie, would you?’

‘Haa. Look at their fatass pig trying to look cool.’

The sight of the Apollo talking like some mafia boss didn't sit well with players watching him. Not to mention, his appearance was just as infuriating.

On the other hand, there were some players who didn't even glance at the sight of Apollo making a ruckus.

‘Damn it!’

A grey-robed player drinking a cup of melon beer was one such example.

‘Why do I have to come all the way here to scout a newbie I don't even know about?’

His name was Hatch.

As the number one magician in the Stormhunter Guild, his precision and accuracy with long-range magic earned him the name Ballista. His fame easily outshined everyone else in the bar combined.

Recently, he had received an order from the guild master.

‘Hahoe Mask Hyrkan... what does she need him for?’

Hahoe Mask Hyrkan. Those that knew him, knew him well, but to those that didn't, he was just another rookie. The order Hatch had received was to find him and offer him a position in the guild.

‘I know this isn't the only reason why I'm here, but it's still too much.’

Of course, he wasn't here just for that alone. His primary goal was to meet the Bulkas Ranger captain, Maoong. It was for the second main scenario quest line, and finding Hyrkan was something the guild master added after hearing Hyrkan was in the Bulkas Mountain Range.

Even so, Hatch found it a waste of his time to spend even a single second on meeting a rookie.

‘The Queen sure is eccentric. There are plenty of others desperate to enter our guild...’

Had the order come from anyone else, Hatch would have ignored it. However, the order was from the guild master. Storm Queen Shir. Remembering her face, Hatch shook his head.

“Ah, yes.”

It was then that Hatch received a sudden voicetalk contact.

“Yes, I’m at the Bulkas Mountain Range. Yes.”

A bit into the call, Hatch’s expression turned worse and worse.

“Yes, I understand.”

After finishing the call, Hatch chugged the rest of the melon beer.

‘Now I have to take care of the Princess too. Dear Lord, save me.’

The Bulkas Ranger Village was slowly filling up with more and more bombs.



Kuooo!

A roar of a bear rang out from a distance, shaking the entire forest.

‘Oh!’

When the roar reached Hyrkan’s body, Hyrkan felt an electrifying sensation from his head to the bottom of his feet.

‘I’m here.’

Under such terrifying air, Hyrkan fixed the hahoe mask onto his face.

‘This is exactly what I’ve been waiting for.’

Although he had already fought with a few boss monsters, they were nothing more than lucky encounters. They were chance

encounters, rather than real hunts. As such, this would be Hyrkan's first boss raid where he had prepared every step of the battle.

It was nostalgic as well. Ever since the war with the Stormhunter Guild, Hyrkan had never participated in a proper boss raid.

It had been several years.

It would be a lie to say those years had no effect on his skills. The Bear Warrior raid would be a battle that would not forgive even a single mistake. Increased risk also meant increased worries and concerns. What if his body wasn't as sharp as in the past? Just the thought of it gave Hyrkan a headache.

But now that the battle was just a few steps away, rather than being nervous, his heart was beating in excitement.

This is it.

Currently, Hyrkan felt his reason for existence more so than any other time. As useless as he was in real life, he was a hero in Warlord.

‘An Jaehyun, this is where it all begins.’

At the same time, this was a test.

‘If you can’t kill this thing alone, then you’ll never be anything greater. If you fail... give up on solo play.’

It was a test that determined whether the path he had taken was right or wrong.

“Haaat!”

Hyrkan let out a spirited shout.

“COME!”

It was the start of a legend.

Chapter 57. Bear Warrior (1)

The Bear Warrior stood on its hind legs, giving off an intimidating aura. Within its helmet, two jet-black pupils shone with dignity.

“Hyrkan, can you really kill that?”

Bear Warrior.

It was the lord of the Bulkas Mountain Range, and as the one in the middle of the strange occurrences happening in the Bulkas Mountain Range, it gave off a fitting aura. Its intimidating presence was enough to make even the most experienced player whimper in fear. In fact, it would be the expected reaction for most.

“Bro, I’m Hyrkan. Super Star Hyrkan!”

In front of such a fearsome monster, the ones that weren’t scared were the strange ones. Some that talked nonsense instead of whimpering were the abnormal and crazy ones.

Even back then, Hyrkan was showing his extraordinary talent. His presence wasn’t any less than the Bear Warrior’s.

“Come on, you’re really going to push for that nickname?”

“Jaehyun, I’m fine with most things you do, but that nickname is a little...”

“Yep. He’s usually weird, but at times, he really likes to prove his weirdness with his entire body.”

“He can fight so well because he’s crazy. What sane person would go all into strength and jump into a fight with a monster like that? You’ll die with just a single hit and end up sucking on your fingers for two days.”

“Aw, shut it! Stop making fun of someone who’s volunteering to go on the frontlines to fight a monster like that. If you don’t stop, I’m going to just leave this guild!”

Hyrkan always made his presence known and proved himself.

“Let’s stop the chitchat and focus on the battle. I’ll distract that guy and open his back, and you guys shoot some magic, got it?”

That he was more capable than anyone else.

Moreover...

“If it looks like I’m about to die, then help. Don’t be stingy with heals. Alright, let’s finish this! Let’s show them we’re not to be stopped here!”

He constantly proved that those that followed him... would reach the skies with him.

‘This is the first time I realized how good I am at remembering things.’

Now, however... those memories were nothing but emotional baggage he wanted to throw away.

Hyrkan shoved those memories into oblivion.

‘No need to remember those bastards.’

Although memories weren’t something one could easily forget, Hyrkan had done so at this moment.

He only sought memories he found useful.

‘Bear Warrior has 3 phases total.’

The Bear Warrior had 3 phases which changed based on its HP.

When its HP was above 70%, its attacks included only its standard attack mixed with two basic skills. Its aggro was directed at the last one to attack it. The two basic skill it had were Shout and Charge. Charge had a 60 second cooldown time, and Shout had 170 seconds. It also had the Fear skill, which was something almost all boss monsters had, and Fear was on a 900 second cooldown

time.

When its HP fell below 70%, it entered its second phase. The Charge skill fell to a 30 second cooldown time, and all of its stats increased by 10%. At the same time, when it was attacked by magic, it would always go after the magician regardless of aggro.

When its HP fell below 30%, it entered its third phase. The Shout skill turned into a passive skill. Debuff skills no longer worked on it, and the cooldown time on Charge disappeared. On top of all this, its stats increased by 33%.

The key point in conquering the Bear Warrior was...

‘Taking off its armor and shield.’

Disarming.

If compared to a player, it would be a wearing a full set.

It was equipped with a helmet, a breastplate, shoulder pads, gloves, and boots. Its upper body was entirely covered with armor. Its lower body was mostly protected with only the inside part of its thighs open. Even so, its thick hair protected the thighs, and it was naturally difficult to attack that area.

Finally, it was equipped with a shield bigger than its own body and a scimitar-shaped sword bigger than an adult male.

The best way to deal damage was to use magic. Fire attribute magic was especially strong against the Bear Warrior as it pierced its armor. However, using fire attribute magic as the main source of damage caused a huge problem when the Bear Warrior entered its second phase. In its second phase, it became a bulldozer that used Charge at magicians in the back while ignoring everything else.

When it entered its third phase, that's when the real hell began. In a situation where there were less magicians, the raid team would now have to deal with fully armed Bear Warrior who couldn't get debuffed. There was no way the remaining tankers and strikers could deal with it.

As such, it was best if one could take off at least 2 of its armor parts, preferably its breastplate and shield.

Without the breastplate, its entire upper body became a target. If needed, one could even climb on its back to deal damage. Without its armor, the Bear Warrior wasn't so difficult.

Without the shield, the power of its Charge would lessen greatly. When the Bear Warrior used Charge, it put its shield in front of itself. Plus, if it used Charge without its shield, it took self-inflicted damage.

That was the very basic of Bear Warrior hunting method.

'29 points on its shoulders and ribs.'

The real point was to aim for the 29 points joining its armor.

The very basic hunting method was something anyone could figure out from seeing its appearance. With just that, it couldn't really be called a hunting method. A real hunting method had to be more detailed.

The 29 points that Hyrkan knew about. It was something worthy of being sold for money.

‘I’ll first aim for the left shoulder which is holding the shield.’

What Hyrkan had to do now was show how it was done.

“Whew!”

Hyrkan took a deep breath of air, then used a skill.

“Golem Summon.”



The clash between the 4-meter tall Golem and the 4-meter tall Bear Warrior was more one-sided than one might have imagined.

Kuoo!

Contrary to his ferocious growl, the Bear Warrior moved with shrewdness.

Clang!

It blocked the Golem's arm swing with its shield, and took advantage of any gap in defense it could find to slash its sword.

Puhat!

It slashed down at the Golem's left shoulder as if to instantly sever it. For the Golem who was on the receiving end, it could only be thankful that it was a sword and not an axe.

‘Amazing.’

Watching this scene, Hyrkan could feel a phantom pain in his shoulder. That was how strong the blow was. The Bear Warrior's attack was both powerful and excellently executed.

‘This is not the time to be impressed.’

Hyrkan gritted his teeth and organized his thoughts. Then, he swung his right arm like a whip.

Whoosh!

The Golem copied Hyrkan's movements and swung its arm like a whip, albeit slower. The Bear Warrior easily blocked its attack with its shield.

Kwang!

Although it looked like a simple clash, the sound suggested otherwise. The boom from their clash was something straight out of a car crash.

Kuooo!

The Bear Warrior's roar cut through the booming sound and rang out.

Crack!

It swung down with its sword once again, which penetrated deeply into the Golem's left shoulder, which had yet to recover. The sword continued down from the Golem's left shoulder to its chest. The resulting wound was enough to instantly kill a human being. Thankfully, the one with the wound was a Golem.

Furthermore...

'Okay!'

The chance Hyrkan had been waiting for had come.

“Hardening!”

When Hyrkan used the skill, his Golem which had partially turned to dirt started hardening. Then, the Golem’s body grabbed onto the Bear Warrior’s sword.

Kuuu!

Although the Bear Warrior tried its hardest to pull out the sword, the Golem’s body held onto the sword tightly and refused to let it go.

Snap!

Meanwhile, Hyrkan snapped his fingers.

Whish!

As soon as the signal came, two Skeleton Warriors that had been waiting in the corner made their appearance. Two Black Orc Skeleton Warriors fearlessly charged at the Bear Warrior.

Puhat!

In that instant, the Bear Warrior kicked the Golem’s body with

its foot, successfully pulling out its sword from its body. With the sword pulled out, the Golem stiffly fell backwards.

Bom!

When the Golem's body touched the ground, the ground rumbled slightly. The Bear Warrior immediately turned its body to face the two Skeleton Warriors charging at it. It then opened its mouth big.

Through its mouth...

Kuaaa!

[Skeleton Warriors ignored the Bear Warrior's Fear.]

Fear struck out.

Of course, Fear had no effect on the Skeleton Warriors. Undead monsters had no such thing as a sense of fear. It was one of the benefits of having Skeleton Warriors.

Of course, just that wasn't enough to cover the overwhelming difference between the Skeleton Warriors and the Bear Warrior.

Swish!

With a swing of its sword, the Bear Warrior easily took care of

one of the Skeleton Warriors.

Puhat!

A Skeleton Warrior was cut in two in an instant and fell on the ground.

Although the other Skeleton Warrior swung its sword at the Bear Warrior, the Bear Warrior's shield blocked the attack with a 'clang.' Although the Skeleton Warrior tried to continue its attack, a sword bore down like lightning from beyond the shield.

To evade the attack, the Skeleton Warrior quickly sidestepped to the right.

Crack!

However, the Bear Warrior was quicker. The Skeleton Warriors left armor was severed off cleanly.

As the Skeleton Warrior staggered after losing its balance, the Bear Warrior struck the Skeleton Warrior with its shield. The Skeleton Warrior's body flew into the air effortlessly.

An overwhelming strength!

It was enough to make most players gasp with horror. However, Hyrkan didn't so much as to flinch at the sight of it.

Hyrkan. The moment the Bear Warrior struck the Skeleton Warriors with its shield, he was already flying towards the Bear Warrior's back. Like an arrow flying through the air, Hyrkan drew a parabola and landed on the Bear Warrior's left shoulder.

The armor at this spot was lighter than in the rest of the Bear Warrior's body to allow its joints to move more freely. Hyrkan stabbed his sword in at this spot.

Crack!

The sound of armor being penetrated rang out.

Then...

Stab!

So did the sound of its skin being penetrated.

That was the end to the sound.

‘A bit light.’

There were no deeper sounds. Instead, another sound rang out.

[Bear Warrior falls under the Demon Curse.]

The system alert from the Bear Warrior falling under the Demon Curse.

Kuooo!

To cleanse the curse it just received, the Bear Warrior used Shout. The ringing from the shout lightly shook Hyrkan who was hanging by the sword stabbed into the Bear Warrior.

[Demon Curse disappears due to the Bear Warrior's Shout.]

The curse had disappeared!

However, Hyrkan didn't panic.

'A game is just a game.'

Instead, Hyrkan acted as if he had expected it to happen. He used the sword stuck in the Bear Warrior as a pivot to spin himself like a hand of a clock. From 6 to 10, Hyrkan quickly climbed the Bear Warrior's shoulder. Immediately afterwards, he pulled out the Orc Hero's Sword and threw it somewhere.

Then, in the hole made by the Orc Hero's Sword, he stabbed in another sword.

Stab!

This time, a deeper sound rang out.

“Aha!”

As did Hyrkan’s laughter.

[Bear Warrior falls under the Demon Curse.]

[Bear Warrior falls under the Slow Curse.]

[Bear Warrior falls under the Corrosive Ghost.]

The three curses quickly swallowed the Bear Warrior’s body.

Their effects were instant.

The Bear Warrior turned its head to the left to bite Hyrkan. However, his movement was visibly slower than before.

Hyrkan quickly jumped off the Bear Warrior, using its shoulder as a launching pad. Even afterwards, he had some time, which he of course used effectively.

‘Here you go!’

Hyrkan grabbed a fist-sized skeleton that was hanging on his chest and threw it into the Bear Warrior’s mouth. The skeleton grew in size to that of an apple.

Then...

Boom!

It exploded.

It was Hyrkan's new level 60 skill, Bone Explosive. Like Skeleton Warriors, they had to be crafted using materials from monsters. The one Hyrkan just threw was worth 50 gold. Although it was called an explosive, it was just throwing money in Hyrkan's eyes.

Its power was easy to see.

However, it wasn't enough to deal fatal damage. In fact, after being struck by the Bone Explosive, the Bear Warrior used Charge at Hyrkan who had just landed on the ground. It was the perfect sneak attack.

Those who didn't know about it would fall victim to it without doubt.

‘Hmph.’

However, it was an attack pattern within Hyrkan's expectations. After landing on the ground, Hyrkan immediately moved to his right.

Whosh!

A bulldozer razed the spot Hyrkan had just been. There was nothing Hyrkan could do to stop the Bear Warrior when it was using Charge. It was hard enough to dodge it.

Kwaaaaa!

The Bear Warrior stopped only after crashing down five, large trees. Then, it turned around and faced Hyrkan once again.

Hyrkan didn't smile at the sight.

'158 seconds.'

He was colder than ever.

'I'll get at least 10 points within the next 158 seconds.'

Chapter 58. Bear Warrior (2)

Fssh!

The breastplate disappeared and the Bear Warrior's back, filled with brown hair like a field of grass, was on fire. At the same time, the Bear Warrior's obsidian-like eyes shook violently.

Kuoo!

It turned its head towards the direction the fireball flew from. There, a Skeleton Magician was standing alone. The Bear Warrior worked its two hind legs and charged towards the Skeleton Magician. His stride and speed easily surpassed the limits of his physique.

Charge.

With this skill, he was a walking natural disaster. In an instant, he closed the distance while holding his shield in front of him. There was nothing the Skeleton Magician could do to avoid the Bear Warrior's tackle.

Kwang!

A boom echoed out as the Skeleton Magician's bones scattered into the forest. Even after creating such a horrific scene, the Bear Warrior didn't seem satisfied as it continued its charge and broke two more trees.

Uooooo!

After stopping its charge, it let out a roar filled with fury. The roar cut past the forest like a sword wind and reached Hyrkan who was running away with the Skeleton Magician as bait.

‘Whew!’

Hyrkan let out a sigh of relief on the inside.

‘I almost died.’

33 minutes had passed since his battle with the Bear Warrior began. 14 minutes had passed since he had successfully attacked his target points and took off the Bear Warrior’s breastplate. After that, the Bear Warrior naturally entered its second phase.

Once the second phase began, Hyrkan’s strategy became simple. Since he had successfully taken off the breastplate which was his main priority, he just had to focus on dealing damage rather than destroying its armor. Of course, dealing damage wasn’t so easy either.

‘It really is hard without a priest.’

The most important thing was to land his attacks.

He estimated his current power and organization to be that of a 5 to 10 men party of his level. It was impressive. As much as this was the style of the necromancer class, performing the role of so many people by himself was something even the Warlord developers couldn't have predicted.

However, there was a critical weakness in his forces.

The lack of a healer.

In a situation where everything was over once Hyrkan died, the lack of a healer that could keep him alive was bigger than he had anticipated.

The role of a healer was absolute. Once a healer reached level 100, as long as a player did not die, he could be back to fighting condition within a minute. There was a skill that revived an ally even if his HP became 0. It was thanks to healers that Warlord's strikers and tankers could attach themselves to gigantic monsters like mosquitos to suck their blood.

Sadly, the help of a healer was something Hyrkan couldn't expect in this battle. His only source of healing was a HP recovery candy worth 100 gold each. As such, Hyrkan considered his two Skeleton Magicians as his life lines. When a magic attack struck the Bear Warrior in its second phase, it turned its aggro to the magician. Hyrkan used this fact to his advantage.

Of course, it wasn't something he could rely on often.

‘With this, Skeleton Magician is on cooldown for a bit.’

To begin with, Skeleton Magician Summon had a longer cooldown time than Skeleton Warrior Summon. Plus, the most he could summon was two.

‘They’re magic power eating ghosts... er, skeletons!’

Most importantly, the amount of magic power needed to summon them and use magic attacks was huge. He had already used much of the consumable items he brought. He had used 20 Bone Explosives worth 50 gold each, and used so much magic power and stamina recovery candies that he lost count. Because of how much candy he ate, he could taste their flavors just by swallowing his saliva. Furthermore, he had used most of the buff items he had. Currently, he only had about 20 percent of them left.

Kuoo!

Hearing the Bear Warrior’s roar, Hyrkan shook his head side by side.

‘It should be entering its third phase soon...’

When participating in a boss raid, the quantity of items one brought was key. If the boss monster had more HP than the quantity of items allowed, the raid was a fail. Otherwise, the raid was a success.

It goes without saying that it was foolish to risk one's life on a failed raid. It was the same for Hyrkan. A true expert knew when to back down in face of a failure. It was much better than going overboard and losing everything.

Of course...

‘Please.’

Although many understood this in theory, not many could carry it out in action. The same was true for Hyrkan. Although his head understood what needed to be done, in a situation where he had to run, Hyrkan would not do so.

That is, if his plans ever went awry, the only thing left for Hyrkan would be destruction.

At that moment...

Boom!

The Bear Warrior's loud stomp instantly silenced the loud forest. Although Hyrkan had been anxious, he was slightly relieved as the corner of his mouth curved up slightly. He let out a short breath of air.

“It's here!”

The third phase had begun.



There was a question that players known to be good at raids received to the point of exhaustion.

“What’s the secret to having a good, easy raid?”

Most players answered like so. It was important to coordinate with your allies. It was important to know the hunting method in and out. It was important to prepare for anything that could happen. It was important to keep calmness in all situations and have good judgement... etc. Although they were decent answers, the most definite answer was something else.

“Go for a monster lower than your own level. With that, the raid will be easy and you’ll do a good job.”

You had to hunt a monster weaker than yourself.

Warlord’s monsters were designed so that a level 100 player could hunt monsters under level 100. It wasn’t the developers that did this, but the artificial intelligence behind the system management. In any case, it was much easier for a level 100 player to hunt a level 80 monster than a level 100 monster. It was typical of an RPG game.

However, those that were known to be good at raids usually went

for monsters 10 to even 30 or 40 levels higher than themselves. A boss monster no less! Most did not consider raids as real raids if this condition was not met.

If put in a good way, it was being risky. If put in a bad way, it was being foolish.

Of course, those that played to make a living had to be risky and foolish. Having fun wasn't their main concern. No one watched cars going 80 km per hour on a highway for entertainment. Cars had to race at about 300 km per hour or so for people to watch and be entertained. Otherwise, no one would pay the money to see such a thing.

Then what was the best way to be both risky and foolish, yet still produce good results?

Everything!

You had to be good at everything!

Keeping calm and having good judgement were just the basics. Boldness and decisiveness, fast reaction, and readiness to gamble. These were all traits that had to be honed to the extreme.

In this sense, Hyrkan was the best.

Boom!

After entering the third phase, the Bear Warrior's stats rose by 33 percent. No debuff magic worked on it and it could use Charge without a cooldown time limit.

Plus, it was effectively a machine. It attacked anything in its sight and destroyed it. Watching the Bear Warrior charge towards you was like watching a truck trying to crush you at full speed.

Most blanked out at such a sight.

Hyrkan, on the other hand, waited for a timing. He didn't blindly dodge the Bear Warrior's charge.

'COME!'

Instead, Hyrkan baited the Bear Warrior. With a large rock behind him, he waited until the Bear Warrior was close enough.

Only then did he throw his body to the side and narrowly avoided the Bear Warrior's Charge.

Boom!

The Bear Warrior's body struck the rock and a booming sound rang out. After rolling on the ground and landing, Hyrkan immediately checked out the state of the Bear Warrior, then his own surroundings.

‘Are there more rocks?’

Although it depended on the situation, it was generally impossible to deal damage to the Bear Warrior with attacks. At least, not with Hyrkan’s current power. It wasn’t that he was completely out of ways to deal damage, but that the method he had was barely effective.

For that reason, the best tactic was to do what he had just done.

Using a large rock, cliff wall, or thick tree, the Bear Warrior had to be baited to charging.

It was easy to say, but he had to perform the action of narrowly dodging a bulldozer throttling at full speed multiple times.

Those watching would certainly be on the edge of their seats for the entire duration.

Thankfully, this wouldn’t last for much longer.

Kuoo!

The Bear Warrior had thrown away its shield.

Even while examining his surroundings, Hyrkan had never lost sight of the Bear Warrior. When he saw the Bear Warrior’s action,

a light shone in his eyes.

‘A special pattern!’

Having thrown away its shield, the Bear Warrior would cease to be a warrior. Instead, it would turn into a tyrannical beast.

One that ran on its fours!

One that moved only by its instincts with its life at risk!

Hyrkan ran towards the rock he found. Once he did, he threw a Skeleton Fragment and summoned a Skeleton Warrior. A Blood Goblin Skeleton Warrior made its appearance. It stared fixedly at Hyrkan after being summoned, waiting for his command. Hyrkan gave it a Bone Explosive and drew a cross on its skull with his finger.

‘Good.’

Then, he picked up the Blood Goblin Skeleton Warrior and threw it amidst the grass.

Thwack!

The moment the sound of it landing rang out, Hyrkan made a similar sound with his finger.

Snap!

‘Here’s the finale.’

Kukuku!

The Bear Warrior was charging towards Hyrkan at full speed. On its fours, it was now faster than before. With the rock behind him, Hyrkan faced the Bear Warrior head on.

There was no time to even blink, much less gulp.

A few seconds afterwards...

BOOM!

With a thundering blast, the large rock shattered into pieces. The Bear Warrior’s body rolled on the ground after shattering the rock. An enormous monster measured in tons was rolling on the ground. The result was disaster itself. The trees on its path was pulled up by the roots, and the ground became a mess.

Kuooo!

The Bear Warrior got up from such a state. Its ferocity had not died down in the slightest. As if to show off its good health, it stood on its hind legs. However, it no longer had the aura it once did. Its helmet was crushed from its repeated charge, its breastplate was

gone, and its back was burnt black from the Skeleton Magician's fire. Its shoulder pads and gloves had also become rags and the armor on its lower body was dented in several places.

It was in this instant that a crudely designed sword flew to its chest like an arrow.

Stab!

The Orc Hero's Sword.

The sword dug itself deeply into the weakened Bear Warrior. The Bear Warrior raised its head to look at the one who threw the sword.

Hyrkan, wearing his Skeleton Armor, put his hands up and shouted towards the Bear Warrior.

“COME!”

Provocation.

It was one that the Bear Warrior had no reason to refuse.

It stomped towards Hyrkan. With its sword and shield gone, it raised its hand to swipe Hyrkan down. Then it planned to bite down on him to finish him off.

In that instant...

Clack clack!

The hidden Skeleton Warrior made its appearance. The two horns on its head clearly showed that it was under the effect of Madness Helm. When the Bear Warrior noticed its presence and turned around, it was too late. The Skeleton Warrior had already flung its body towards the Bear Warrior. It flew like a bird and stung the Bear Warrior's body like a wasp.

At the same time...

Boom!

The Bone Explosive in the Skeleton Warrior's possession exploded.

The destructive force of the Bone Explosive was immense. It had to be. A 500 gold Bone Explosive. It was the strongest one Hyrkan had prepared, one that rivaled an attack by a level 70 magician.

Of course, that wasn't enough. The Bear Warrior had not fallen.

Up until here, everything was as Hyrkan planned.

‘Perfect.’

While the Bear Warrior was distracted by the Bone Explosive, Hyrkan had charged towards the Bear Warrior. Now, he leaped into the air, flying towards it. He grabbed the sword in the Bear Warrior's chest.

Stab!

The sword dug in even deeper.

Guuuuuo!

Just like that, the sword cut down on the Bear Warrior's skin, muscle, and flesh. What adorned the Bear Warrior's death was Hyrkan's sword.



"I need two titles?"

"Yes, sir. Two titles related to the Bulkas Rangers are required in order to receive the scenario quest from the Bulkas Ranger captain, Maoong."

After hearing the explanation, Hatch shook his head.

"Two titles to obtain the quest... what a pain in the ass."

“The quickest way is to perform 10 quests that the Bulkas Rangers give and hunting 100 monsters within a day. The quest team is currently doing their best, so it should be over shortly.”

“This is why I don’t like main scenario quests. It takes 2, 3 days to do pretty much anything... hey, is there a level 100 hunting ground nearby?”

“Past the Bulkas Mountain Range is a Block Field. It hasn’t been opened yet, so I can only suggest you look elsewhere...”

The man explaining stopped when he saw Hatch waving his hand. Shaking his head, hatch gulped down the melon beer in front of him.

He was irritated.

‘Two days at the very least. If I’m slow, I could even be stuck here for four days.’

Four days was enough to level up. Using the time to complete a quest was a bitter thing to do. Of course, it would work out for the better in the future. After all, the title he would get from the quest progress would be worth more than leveling up once.

There was something else that was irritating him.

“By the way, are you sure Hahoe Mask Hyrkan is near here?”

“That, we know for sure. There’s a guild called the Apollo Guild. It seems they clashed with Hahoe Mask Hyrkan recently.”

“The hell is that?”

“It’s a guild made by some rich guy named Apollo. His characteristic would be... that he’s extremely fat.”

At his explanation, Hatch immediately thought of a person.

‘Ah, so the owner of that poor armor must have been Apollo.’

“So? Why did they clash?”

“I’m not exactly sure, but the chance is that the Apollo Guild picked a fight with him. The rumors surrounding them aren’t the greatest. Not that it’s bad... in any case, Hyrkan hasn’t left the Bulkas Mountain Range. We are sure of it. I will take care of looking for him, so you just have to show up when I do.”

Even at this, Hatch’s expression didn’t brighten up. In the end, nothing was resolved.

‘I swear, once my contract ends, I’m leaving for sure.’

Remembering the contract duration, Hatch gulped down the melon beer once again.

Hatch. His contract with the Stormhunter Guild would last until year 2050.

Chapter 59. Dungeon Map (1)

[You completed the quest, ‘Maoong’s Test.’]

[You obtained the title, ‘Bear Warrior Hunter.’]

[You obtained the title, ‘One Who Killed the Master of the Bulkas Mountain Ranger.’]

[You obtained the title, ‘First Hunter.’]

[Golem Summon skill rank rises to D.]

[Madness Helm skill rank rises to C.]

[You have leveled up.]

Perfect!

There was no other word that could describe this moment. After successfully hunting the Bear Warrior alone, Hyrkan enjoyed the reward fully. He had completed the main scenario quest, obtained a total of four titles, increased two of his skill ranks, and leveled up.

Lastly...

“Yep, this is it.”

In the puddle left by the melted corpse of the Bear Warrior, Hyrkan could see three fist-sized jewels.

Picking up the jewels, Hyrkan trembled.

‘This is what you call a lucky drop!’

The pent up feeling from the Sword Monkeys finally exploded as a smile formed naturally. He had begun to shoulder dance, which he had not done recently. Along with it, he converted everything from the Bear Warrior into crafting coins. Although it was a tedious task, the smile never left Hyrkan’s face as he toiled. It was one of the happiest face Hyrkan had since starting Warlord.

The amount of coins he got was enough to fill the pouch he brought to the size of an adult male’s head.

‘Today’s just getting better and better!’

He didn’t think he would get three crafting jewels.

Three crafting jewels meant much more than getting one more crafting jewel from two.

‘If I sell these as a set, I can get much more...’

Currently, there was no Bear Warrior set anywhere in Warlord. With three crafting jewels, it was enough to craft 3 rare rank items, which was enough to produce a set effect.

‘Just selling these would net about 10,000 gold at the minimum.’

If he could sell these to an item collector, he could buy an entire cow, much less some meat.

‘Looks like I’ll be oiling up my stomach... with cow oil that is.’

That wasn’t it. The video he took was phenomenal. A necromancer hunting a boss monster by himself was impressive even in Hyrkan’s eyes. He predicted 5 or even 10 million views.

The worth of 10 million views was enormous. Sponsorships would come like candy and the amount he would get from that would be completely different from before. What he was getting in won would turn into yen. In other words, he would get 10 times more than before!

“... WOW.”

After a brief pause, Hyrkan kissed his biceps.

‘Well done, Hyrkan. You’re the best.’

Self-praise.

Although he looked like a crazyman, Hyrkan was satisfied with everything he had done to the point he felt no remorse in his embarrassing action. In fact, he wasn’t just satisfied. From one to ten, everything had played out like he wanted. Moreover, this was a first in Warlord history, and first in Hyrkan’s successes.

‘Yep, An Jaehyun! This! This is it! Your choice wasn’t wrong!’

Solo raid success!

Although there was room for improvement, Hyrkan could also feel the infinite potential for improvement from this raid.

He now had assurance exceeding confidence.

‘Just keep going this way.’

I wasn’t wrong!

These words that echoed in Hyrkan’s mind was the biggest reward from this raid.



“Shit.”

“Hm?”

“Fuck.”

“What did you just say?”

Bulkas Ranger Village.

Located at halfway up the Bulkas Mountain, the Bulkas Mountain Village was the only place where players could rest, buy consumable items, and receive quests. Of course, those that visited the Bulkas Mountain Range naturally stopped by at least once at this place.

Moreover, as people found out that the Bulkas Mountain Range was ideal for levels 60~80, more have been coming by the day.

“What do you mean by what? I’m saying what I’m feeling.”

At such a place, someone was spending his entire time just looking for one person. It was natural that he wouldn’t be in the greatest mood.

At the moment, he didn’t even want to hide how he was feeling.

“What if the executives hear you? Shut it.”

“Like they’d come here. They’re too busy fucking around together. Tell them to come!”

Two Apollo Guild players were currently waiting by the Bulkas Ranger Village entrance, looking for the player that killed three members of the Apollo Guild.

They must have spent at least 7 hours by now. It could be considered short, depending on how one looked at it. It was common for players to spend six or so hours to get from hunting grounds to castles. This was also why some players amassed items that raised their movement speeds.

However, it wasn't a short time considering they had paid tens of millions of won to buy the gaming machine and were paying monthly fees to continue playing. 7 hours looking for a person could never feel longer. Not to mention, they weren't doing this of their own volition.

It would be fortunate if foul language was the only thing coming out of them.

"I mean, come on. The one that got PKed is the retard. Why do we have to do this for those retards?"

"Hey, lower your voice!"

"Three of them couldn't even take care of one person. How does that even make sense? They were the ones who followed him too! They want us to take revenge for them? Isn't it better to just cut them from the guild?"

"Watch what you're saying. Otherwise..."

"What? I can leave the guild, who cares? There are thousands of

guilds in Warlord.”

The moment he said those words, the player could feel even more rage boiling up from inside him.

Leave the guild? Sure. He could do it. It’s not like a guild could prevent him from leaving, and he surely wasn’t breaking any laws by doing so.

It’s just that... he was afraid of what would happen as a result.

Playing as a runaway wasn’t something he considered fun. No one did.

‘This dirty world...’

Above all, such a thing was sure to happen in the Apollo Guild. The guild master was someone who did anything he could do punish those that ignored him. With how much he was overflowing with money, there wasn’t much he couldn’t do in Warlord. After all, he could hire a Ranker given enough money.

Of course, he could still leave if he wanted. He just had to die 6 or so times. But rather than going through such things, it was better to just swallow his pride and enjoy an easier time in his current guild.

“Really, fuck this...”

At that moment.

“Hey!”

“What? Stop trying to stop me from...”

“No, I was just thinking, what if we just catch a random guy?”

“What?”

The Apollo Guild members thought up a solution to their problem.

“Think about it. We don’t even know the face of the guy we’re looking for. Then why don’t we just find someone who looks like a pushover? We can just say it was him, and I’m sure the executives will fall for it.”

“What if they don’t?”

“We’ll just say we mistook him. It’s not like we’re in the wrong here. They didn’t even give us a picture!”

At that, the other guild member fell over in a swoop. They were both furious, although only one of them was voicing it out loud.

And in their line of sight...

“How about him?”

“Him?”

“He looks like a pushover. Even if not, it doesn’t look like he has any backers we need to worry about.”

“He does look like a pushover.”

A suitable target appeared.



Hatch turned around.

‘What now?’

There was a ruckus nearby. One player was surrounded by several others. Hatch made apathetic expression.

‘In Warlord, there are no days without wind.’

Hatch would have usually ignored a situation like this. He was already overflowing with tasks. Even now, he was coming back from a quest to obtain one of his titles. The Top 30 Guilds

employed a method where their quest team did most of the work and the main members came by receive credit. Even this was a tedious task, and Hatch didn't want to involve himself in any more bothersome things.

‘Eh?’

However, the players in question were players Hatch knew.

‘Aren't they from that Apollo Guild?’

And.

‘Wait, weren't they looking for Hahoe Mask?’

They were looking for the same person he was looking for. Otherwise, Hatch would not have cared.

‘Don't tell me...’

Hatch walked towards the crowded area, and when he did, he could hear what they were talking about.

“I already told you, I don't know who you guys are!”

“Don't try to weasel out of it! Pay for your actions!”

“What actions?”

“Going against the Apollo Guild!”

“I told you, this is the first time I’m hearing that name! I just came here for the first time!”

Hatch turned his head. A typical traveler’s outfit. To be exact, it was the Subjugation Association’s default set. On top of this, the player in question had the word ‘pushover’ written all over him. Surrounding him were 6 members of the Apollo Guild.

‘That’s Hahoe Mask Hyrkan?’

Since he had never seen Hahoe Mask Hyrkan’s real face, there was no way of confirming whether he was looking at the real Hahoe Mask.

As such, Hatch gave it a little thought.

‘As long as Hahoe Mask Hyrkan isn’t an idiot, he wouldn’t come over announcing that he’s the Hahoe Mask after taking care of members of the Apollo Guild.’

The symbol of Hyrkan was his hahoe mask. He appeared in all his videos wearing it. In other words, he could easily hide his identity by taking it off. It was clear that Hyrkan wasn’t such an idiot that wouldn’t make use of that fact.

That is, it was impossible for Hatch to decide whether this was the real Hyrkan by looking at his face. After all, he had never seen him before. On the other hand, the Apollo Guild was much more likely to have seen his face. They were taken out by him after all. In any case, they would have more information about Hyrkan's looks than Hatch himself did.

Hatch quickly came to a decision.

‘If he's the real one, great. Even if he's not, I'm helping a guy getting bullied, so I'll be justified.’

It wouldn't hurt to try.

“Wait.”

Hatch came forward.

At that moment, everyone's attention turned to Hatch. The Apollo Guild's members frowned, and it was clear that they were thinking, ‘who the hell is this?’ On the other hand, the player surrounded by them had a completely different expression than them. His stiff expression seemed to be saying, ‘this fucker is...!’

Of course, Hatch didn't catch the meaning behind their expressions. He wasn't the type to study people's faces, and he surely wasn't in a situation to be doing so.

Hatch only spoke his mind.

“Stop causing a ruckus. I have a business with him, so let him go.”

At Hatch’s words, one of the Apollo Guild members snorted as if he had just heard the most absurd thing.

“And who are you?”

Hatch sneered.

‘So this is why the Top 30 Guild members sometimes go about hiding their identity. This is fun in a way.’

This was the first time he had been treated this way since he started Warlord. Rather than finding it unpleasant, he found it amusing.

“Me?”

At that moment, Hatch began to fiddle with his watch. Not just the Top 30 Guilds, but most other famous guilds had their own guild uniforms. The Stormhunter Guild naturally had uniforms as well. Although the item options weren’t that good, they were the best defensive items against players.

However...

‘Ah!’

Hatch realized that he hadn’t put his uniform in his item slot.

His expression immediately turned to a frown.

‘What a stupid mistake!’

Quickly taking his hand off his watch, he raised it up and lowered the hood covering his head. Although he didn’t have his uniform on, his face was still well known. He was hoping the other side would notice him and back off.

Unfortunately for Hatch, none of the Apollo Guild’s players noticed him. Although they momentarily studied him, thinking he looked familiar, they weren’t able to remember who he was. In the end, the reaction he got wasn’t what he was hoping for.

“What? Are you trying to pick a fight with our guild? Do you want to quit this game too?”

At his words, Hatch didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

Then...

“Hey! Hatch!”

A sharp voice rang out.

“Where are you going by yourself? Stick with the team! Do you wanna die?”

Someone shouted and everyone turned to look at them. Other players who were just watching the situation also turned to look towards the direction of the voice. Then, they all made the same expression.

“!”

“It’s the Stormhunter Guild!”

The Stormhunter Guild. One of the representative guilds in all of Warlord. Their presence was akin to stars on the sky for most Warlord players. Now looking directly at them, they could only gasp for air.

One person.

‘What’s wrong with my luck today?’

The person in the middle of all this, Hyrkan. He was the only one who made an unpleasant rather than surprised expression.

Chapter 60. Dungeon Map (2)

Hyrkan's plan was simple. He would visit the Bulkas Ranger Village in plain clothes, finish his quest with Maoong, then leave with the rewards and a new quest. He had no plans to show off his identity and gather needless attention.

Unfortunately, the Apollo Guild had caught sight of Hyrkan who was wearing plain clothes.

They didn't do it knowing Hyrkan's real identity. Hyrkan could tell that they just stopped a random guy that seemed to be a pushover.

Although Hyrkan wasn't happy that they saw him as a pushover, he was more than happy to laugh it off as fate's trick.

But.

'Why are the Stormhunters here?'

Ballista Hatch. The moment Hyrkan saw that face, his face stiffened. With Hatch, Hyrkan's ill-ties ran deep. Hyrkan had been killed by him three times in the past. Not in a 1v1 of course, but while Stormhunter Guild's tankers were holding him off, Hatch had used magic and killed Hyrkan.

Hatch was undoubtedly a player with skills. His ability to predict Hyrkan's escape route and attack accordingly always impressed

Hyrkan.

It was surprising enough for Hyrkan to have seen him, but he was even approaching him saying he had a business with him.

‘What’s happening?’

He didn’t feel good about the current situation.

If this was it, then Hyrkan would have passed it off as fate playing a trick on him. Even in the worst case, Hyrkan was confident he could hold his ground against Ballista. Hatch wasn’t good at fighting 1v1 anyways.

However...

“Where are you going by yourself? Stick with the team! Do you wanna die?”

Storm Princess Hahui. The moment she appeared, Hyrkan couldn’t just think of this as fate’s trick. Furthermore, Hyrkan knew the situation had become even more complicated.

‘Why this crazy bitch of all people?’

Hahui. She was a downgraded version of the Storm Queen. She was weaker than Shir, but the problem was that she saw Shir as some sort of a goddess. Why else would she be called the Storm

Princess?

She was also the person that irritated Hyrkan the most in the past. To Hahui, Hyrkan who had refused Shir's offer and bared his fangs against her was no different than Satan himself. Although she wasn't as skilled as Hyrkan, with her going after Hyrkan like a mad dog, she had always irked Hyrkan, like a pebble in his shoes.

Furthermore, Hyrkan had never fought Ballista Hatch up front. Hahui, on the other hand, was a completely different story. Not only had seen her up front multiple times, he had been headbutted by her dozens of times.

'Let's not get involved.'

It was only obvious that tension and irritation would fill Hyrkan in this moment.

Of course, the ones who were most confused were the Apollo Guild members.

"What's this?"

"I don't know."

"Why are the Stormhunters..."

"He's from the Stormhunter Guild?"

“We’re fucked...”

Although they had planned on using a pushover to take care of their problems, a tiger had followed the pushover’s trails. Not only were they confused, they were also fearful for their lives.

Meanwhile, Hatch and Hahui conversed, not minding the surprised Apollo Guild members at all.

“Hatch, you son of a bitch, do you wanna die?”

“Can you stop saying that? Clean your mouth and be more ladylike.”

“What did you say, you son of a bitch?”

“... Nevermind.”

“If you keep ignoring the guild’s rules, you’re going to die.”

Hatch only shook his head at Hahui’s foul language. Although her appearance was that of a small, cute girl, she talked and acted like a man.

Furthermore, she emphasized the guild’s rules more than anyone else in the Stormhunter Guild. She hated those that affected the guild’s number one rule – group activity. Plus, she was the

Stormhunter Guild's Disciplinary Leader and Assault Captain. Although she was scary, Hatch had to admit her worth was greater than his.

‘Fuck my life.’

Hatch gritted his teeth and shut his mouth. Although he acknowledged her abilities and achievements, every time he talked to her, he wanted to leave the game more and more. And every time he felt this way, his contract that lasted until 2050 carved away at his soul.

While Hatch was thinking about his painful circumstance, Hahui turned her gaze away from Hatch and looked towards Hyrkan.

“You’re Hahoe Mask Hyrkan?”

“No, I’m not.”

Hyrkan immediately replied.

‘No need for me to play along with them.’

Hyrkan didn’t know why they were looking for him, but since there were no benefits in revealing his identity, he didn’t plan on doing so.

Hahui then glanced sideways to Hatch, giving a ‘is this him?’

kind of look. Hatch avoided her eyes, indicating he wanted nothing to do with her. Hahui looked at Hyrkan like a wolf in front of a prey.

Suddenly, her fist flew towards Hyrkan.

It happened in an instant.

There were only two who could keep up with what happened in real time. One was Hahui, who initiated the action, and the other was of course...

‘I knew it. This bitch.’

Hyrkan.

He knew the Storm Princess’s temper better than anyone. If he dodged her fist here, it would be obvious that he wasn’t a typical player.

Because of this, even though he could have dodged and even counterattacked...

Smack!

He let himself be hit.

‘Tsk!’

Like a tree, Hyrkan didn’t move an inch and let himself be hit by Hahui’s fist. By the force of the attack, his body flew backwards like a scene from the movies.

Thud!

He fell on the ground with his arms and legs out in a 大 shape. It was perfect.

Even Hahui who threw the punch was surprised.

“Hey, looks like it’s not him.”

Watching Hahui say this to his face, Hatch was dumbfounded.

‘You’re the one who hit him. Why are you looking at me for?’

Meanwhile, Hyrkan got up from the ground. If it happened in real life, he could very well be dead or at the very least be fainted, but he was in a VR game.

“What was that?! You think you can just hit people because you’re in a famous guild?”

At his words, Hahui made a slight frown. Considering her

personality, she would not resolve the situation in the correct manner.

As such, Hatch took action.

“Sorry. Looks like we got the wrong person.”

Hatch bowed in a 90-degree angle, showing sincerity in his apology. Of course, no victim would let the matter to rest with just that. Hyrkan raised his voice.

“You think apologizing is enough?”

“No, of course not. We’ll compensate you as well.”

“Compensate?”

Hatch immediately took out a gold colored coin. It was a clean coin with ‘1000’ written on it. 1,000 gold. In real world currency, it was worth 1,000,000 won. Since it didn’t really hurt when hit in the virtual world, it was enough to make anyone satisfied.

Hatch was also more than happy to use 1,000 gold to let the matter to rest.

Of course, he was not paying this out of his own pocket. It was the Stormhunter Guild that was paying. The coin he took out was given to him as part of the guild’s support fund.

“We apologize.”

Watching him bow once again in a sincere manner, Hyrkan took the coin with a sour expression.

Hyrkan then turned around and looked at the Apollo Guild members. Watching them stand around flustered, Hyrkan opened his mouth.

“I’m going to say this once again. I’m not the one you’re looking for. I can go now, right?”

At this, the Apollo Guild members could only nod their heads. Although it didn’t look like the pushover was related to the Stormhunter Guild, they weren’t in any position to continue talking in front of them.

Hyrkan then disappeared, still looking sour.

Just like that, the small ruckus came to an end.



After the crowd dispersed, Hatch looked at Hahui and spoke.

“You better get that 1,000 gold back to me.”

At Hatch's words, Hahui simply stared at her right fist.

Hatch looked at her with a sour expression.

‘So you’re ignoring me now?’

In that instant...

Whish!

Her right fist came flying at his face.

“!”

Scared witless, Hatch tilted his head backwards, and Hahui's fist stopped right in front of his eyes.

It wasn't an intimidation Hatch could just let off as a joke.

“The hell was that?”

“That's normal, right?”

“What?”

“When a fist is flying towards you, isn’t it normal to react?”

“What do you...”

It was then that Hatch remembered the scene of the pushover flying backwards with Hahui’s fist. He flew in a picture perfect manner, like something out of the movies. It was almost like he was a dummy, rather than a living being. That is, it seemed like he saw the punch coming, and chose to let it happen without dodging.

Of course, Hatch didn’t dwell on it for long.

“Who the hell’s gonna dodge when you throw out a punch so suddenly? It’d be weird if you could react.”

Hahui’s punch was just too quick. Even just now, Hatch could react slightly because he was focused on Hahui. But back then, Hahui had attacked completely randomly. The man who was sent flying was totally justified in his lack of reaction. Not to mention, he didn’t seem like a good player anyways, as if he had spent all his luck just getting to the Bulkas Mountain Range. With the Bulkas Mountain Range’s recent rise in popularity, many players were coming. The number of monsters on the way to the Bulkas Village was low, and the paths to take were laid out online. It was easy for anyone to arrive at the Bulkas Village with enough luck.

“I see.”

“Nevermind that, just pay back the 1,000 gold.”

“Hmph.”

Hahui snorted and cut him off.

‘This bitch. I’m going to transfer away from the guild if only to get away from her...’

Hatch also didn’t want to continue talking to Hahui.

But it wasn’t so easy for him.

“You can be stubborn later. Since we’ve been seen, we have to move fast. Like you said, we have to move as a group. It’s not the time to worry about Hahoe Mask Hyrkan or whoever.”

It wouldn’t be long until the story of the Stormhunter Guild entering the Bulkas Mountain Range would be spread. They were expecting it in the first place. There was no way rumors wouldn’t spread when the Stormhunter Guild was moving. Plus, if they kept hiding themselves, it would just be a waste of time.

As such, the best way was to move as quickly as possible to accomplish their goal once people found out.

“Fine.”

Hahui also agreed with Hatch.



‘That bitch.’

Hyrkan held his boiling anger in.

‘I was going to let you guys be, but looks like you guys want to follow me to the ends of the earth.’

Although he would never forget his past relationship with the Stormhunter Guild, he didn’t have any plans to go after them in this new life.

But since things had turned out this way, Hyrkan was boiling with rage.

‘They’re just as unlikable in this life as they were in the last.’

It was true that he was able to avoid trouble thanks to Hatch and Hahui. Without them, dealing with the Apollo Guild would have been annoying.

‘Hmph.’

Hyrkan grit his teeth. He didn’t want to thank the Stormhunter Guild for anything.

On the other hand, he was surprised.

‘They aren’t called the Top 30 Guilds for nothing, I guess.’

The fact that the Stormhunter Guild came to the Bulkas Mountain Range meant that they were progressing in the main scenario quest.

Hyrkan could come to the Bulkas Mountain Range because he knew about it from the start. Normally, guilds had to pick up clues from different places and take a roundabout way to get to the areas related to the main scenario quests. The Stormhunter Guild also likely would have found clues regarding the Bulkas Mountain Range while completing multiple different quest routes.

‘If I started late, it would’ve been quite the hassle.’

The Top 30 Guilds progressed very quickly thanks to their quest teams. They didn’t hesitate to spend money to buy information either. Some of them even shared information with each other.

Had Hyrkan spent 10 to 14 more days leveling up as he had originally planned, his path would have overlapped with the Stormhunter Guild. It would have been a disaster if he had failed in hunting the Bear Warrior because of it.

‘Good thing I did it in one try.’

Hyrkan let out a short sigh of relief.

At the same time, Hyrkan became aware of the strength of the Top 30 Guilds, and realized the kind of determination and resolution he had to have to go against them by himself.

‘I have to be quicker. Next up is meeting Maoong.’

Hyrkan couldn’t afford to waste any time.

Chapter 61. Dungeon Map (3)

“A fully armed bear fighting on its hind legs like a warrior... something is definitely happening here in the Bulkas Mountain Range.”

As Hyrkan told Maoong everything he could about the Bear Warrior, Maoong had a grim expression. When Maoong stopped talking, the air was filled with a serious and somber atmosphere. And as if to match such an atmosphere, Hyrkan also kept a stern expression.

Of course, his thinking was completely different on the inside.

‘Come on, let’s get this over with.’

The fact that the Stormhunter Guild had arrived at the Bulkas Mountain Range made Hyrkan restless. He was no longer happy to keep up with Maoong taking his sweet time.

Unfortunately for Hyrkan, Maoong had no way of knowing what Hyrkan was thinking. He was faithful to his role.

“Thank you.”

He started with an expression of gratitude.

“If it weren’t for you, it would have been hard to avoid a

casualty. We also learned a valuable piece of information thanks to you.”

“Please. I’m just happy I could be of help.”

Hyrkan replied immediately.

“Thank you, really.”

“No, no.”

Hyrkan couldn’t help but make a sour face.

‘Hurry...’

Then, as if Hyrkan’s prayers had been heard, Maoong got up from his seat. After heading to one of the bookshelves that were lined up against the wall, he carefully took out a book. Although its cover didn’t look any different than the others, its inside was filled with folded papers.

‘Eh?’

The voice inside Hyrkan’s head urging him on disappeared like snow on heated asphalt.

‘Don’t tell me...’

Hyrkan's expectation began to grow, as Maoong placed the folded papers on his desk for Hyrkan to see.

“These are maps I've gathered during my time here at the Bulkas Mountain Range.”

Maps!

Upon hearing this word, Hyrkan let out a shout inwardly.

‘Yes! Dungeon maps!’

Dungeon map.

As one might expect, it was a map showing the location of a dungeon. In Warlord, dungeon maps were no different than treasure maps.

Another name for them was...

‘Maoong, you're collecting some good stuff here!’

Certified checks.

That was the worth of a dungeon map. A dungeon from a dungeon map guaranteed at least 1 title and a Rare rank item.

Dungeons also gave much higher EXP than field hunting grounds, and videos of them were highly anticipated as well. If lucky, one could find hidden quests, and most importantly, the chance of leaving a dungeon with a valuable skill-book was immensely high. Most skill-books that were Rare rank and above came from dungeons.

‘They say life is full of ups and downs. With what I just went through, this makes me feel so good!’

Hyrkan was back to being extremely happy.

‘Looks like it’s really going to be beef tonight.’

Hyrkan began to immediately think about his dinner. Maoong then continued.

“Considering their value, I’ve kept them with me, but since I cannot leave the Bulkas Mountain Range, it is a waste to just let them be.”

“I agree.”

“Although it might not be enough of a reward, take one you want.”

“Thank you.”

Hyrkan wasn't disappointed by this in any way.

‘It doesn't matter which one I choose.’

He didn't brood over which one to choose. He simply picked the middle one, from the five maps in front of him.

‘It'll be 10,000 gold at the very least...’

With a 10,000,000 won check in hand, Hyrkan could feel his heart racing.

“I'll choose this one.”

Hyrkan picked a map. Maoong then continued as if he had been waiting for Hyrkan to make his decision.

“I have one more favor to ask of you.”

Hyrkan observed Maoong's actions carefully, and noticed that he had left the maps on the desk.

‘Oh?’

He immediately understood why Maoong had taken out several maps.

‘He’s going to give me another one for a favor?’

It looked like Maoong wanted to make a trade with Hyrkan.

Hyrkan was more than happy to comply. For the sake of the main scenario quest, if he had to, he would have done Maoong’s favors for free. But since Maoong was giving out such good rewards, Maoong seemed like an angel to Hyrkan.

“I will be more than happy to do you a favor, sir.”

“Beyond the Bulkas Mountain Range, there is a place called the Parung Forest. Do you know of it?”

Parung Forest.

Hyrkan couldn’t help but frown for a moment.

“No, I don’t.”

“I have received reports of armed monsters, like the Bear Warrior you fought. I’d like to ask you to investigate that place, and if you find anything suspicious, I’d like you to do a closer examination. Although it might not be enough, I will reward you the best I can.”

Maoong then tapped on his desk twice. At the place his fingers tapped were his dungeon maps.

Hyrkan could only nod in response.

“I will head to Parung Forest.”

[The quest, ‘Maoong’s Request’, begins.]

“I give you my sincere gratitude.”

It was a quest he couldn’t refuse.

But hearing the destination, Hyrkan could feel a slight headache coming over him.

‘Parung Forest... of all the troublesome places...’

Parung Forest was a place filled with monsters above level 90. It wasn’t somewhere Hyrkan could go at his current state. Not to mention, although he had fragmentary information on Parung Forest, he himself had never hunted there. Warlord was just too vast for Hyrkan to remember everything.

‘Whew.’

However, it wasn’t outside of his scope of expectation. In the first place, it was a miracle that a level 60 player like Hyrkan could have passed Maoong’s Test. It was a quest designed for players above level 80, and Hyrkan beat such a quest at level 60. By himself no

less! It was only obvious that future quests would grow in difficulty. Hyrkan had already expected that he would need to stop to level up.

It was just he felt more pressured with pursuers right behind him.

‘Looks like I’ll need to focus on leveling up.’



After leaving the Bulkas Ranger Village, Hyrkan examined the dungeon map he had obtained. The content of the map would make one ask if it was done by a child. There was barely anything on it, and because only a small area could be seen, it was impossible for an unknowing person to figure out where it was.

There was only one clue. The two characters ‘Su’ and ‘Ra’ written in the corner.

‘Is it the Sura Canyon?’

Sura Canyon.

It was the home of the level 80 monsters, Devil Goats. The Sura Canyon was a long and winding ravine. Hidden within the grass and trees inside were a peculiar species of goats that liked jumped out the canyon’s cliffs as if they were grass plains.

‘It’s not so bad.’

For Hyrkan, it wasn’t an unfavorable place.

In fact, the Sura Canyon was a fine hunting ground. Although the place was filled with Devil Goats, they themselves liked to move about alone. Their combat strength was lower than most level 80 monster, and they gave average amount of EXP. The hunting ground difficulty was below average, but the experience it gave was average. Paired together, it was a great hunting ground for Hyrkan to reach level 70.

The problem was that what was good for Hyrkan was good for others as well.

‘Didn’t the Red Bulls occupy that area recently?’

A week ago, the Red Bulls Guild discovered the Sura Canyon and occupied the area.

In Warlord, declaring a monopoly or occupancy held a political significance. Declaring a monopoly meant that no one was able to enter a designated area without permission. Declaring occupancy meant that those who entered a designated area had to abide by certain rules. Those that failed to comply were, of course, killed.

In most cases, people acknowledged declaration of monopoly and occupancy for some time.

In this case, since it was an occupancy declaration, there would be no problem as long as Hyrkan followed the Red Bulls' rules.

'The guys from Red Bulls aren't so bad... but I'm slightly bothered that they allied themselves with the Stormhunters.'

Hyrkan was concerned by the fact that it was the Red Bulls who occupied the area.

Of course, Hyrkan didn't have too much of a choice. Rather than hunting elsewhere and going to Sura Canyon's dungeon, it was much more efficient to hunt in Sura Canyon and go to the dungeon.

At this point, even a single day was worth a lot.

Without even stopping for a breath, Hyrkan ran in the direction of Sura Canyon.



"So this is the Bulkas Mountain Range."

"The clue to the main scenario quest is here, eh?"

Ten days after the sighting of Ballista Hatch and Storm Princess Hahui in the Bulkas Ranger Village, the Bulkas Mountain Range

had become the hottest place in Warlord. Players of all levels and guilds of all sizes came to look for the treasure that was sure to be in the Bulkas Mountain Range.

Fans of Warlord also began to see the Bulkas Mountain Range with great interest.

It was the same for Romany. Due to the nature of his occupation, he couldn't help but have great interest in the Bulkas Mountain Range. Because of this, he couldn't help but tremble at what he currently had in his hands.

“Whew.”

‘It took a full week.’

He had spent a full week to work on a single video. It didn't mean it had taken a long time. After all, one week couldn't be considered long in movie production.

‘To think I made this with just one week...’

The reason he was trembling was he was amazed by what he accomplished in just a week.

‘I see why kids like to make baking powder volcanoes for fun.’

Thinking about the kind of impact his video would have, Romany

trembled once again.

To calm himself down, Romany took a sip of hot cocoa.

However...

‘This is a real bomb. If the videos so far had been grenades, this one is a bomb strong enough to knock down a few buildings. Not to mention, with the current timing....’

Romany’s hands couldn’t stop shaking. Seeing his continued trembling, Romany smiled.

‘This is it.’

The knowledge that a piece of art he made could shake the world. How many times would he be able to experience such a feeling in his lifetime? As a creator, Romany couldn’t help but be happy.

‘This is what I wanted to make!’

Just like that, Romany sent the bomb in his hand to his client.



“Yes, the work-out has been canceled. Yes, it was sudden.”

Choi Sulyeon's secretary, Park Suji.

The Choi Sulyeon she knew was someone that all women... no, all human being would be envious of. Not only was she born with everything, she furthermore had the ability to put them to use by 120 percent.

‘This is the first time she's acted this way.’

One of her greatest strengths was her ability to create a solid schedule and follow it. Especially when it came to working out, eating, sleeping, or other standard activities, she kept to her schedule without failure. Unless there was a natural disaster happening, she kept to her eating schedule, work-out schedule, and sleep schedule at all times.

But for the first time, she ignored her schedules.

‘This is the first time she ate in her room. Not to mention, she canceled her work-out plans.’

This was the first time Park Suji had seen her act this way since she started serving her.

As such, Park Suji couldn't help but wonder.

‘What happened?’

While Park Suji was contemplating the different possibilities, Choi Sulyeon was watching a video in her room.

Not even a day had passed since the video came out, yet the views were in 6 digits. The first digit was a 6, even. By this time tomorrow, the numbers would undoubtedly be at 7 digits league.

Watching the video, Choi Sulyeon's expression was stiff. She didn't even wipe the salad dressing on the corner of her mouth, as she watched the 11-minute video on a loop. A scene of someone soloing a never-before-seen boss monster. She engraved each and every one of his movements in her brain.

It wasn't until she had watched the video 6 full times that she finally pulled her eyes away. Over an hour had passed since she started watching, and Choi Sulyeon murmured softly.

“... no matter what, I'm going to make him mine.”

Chapter 62. Deep Canyon Spring (1)

A large, five-meter tall Golem was standing between two trees, fully blocking anyone from passing between. Glaring at it, was a goat whose eyes sparkled with a deep red color.

Its appearance was completely different from that of an ordinary goat. It was easily 2 meters in length, was as large as a bull, and its devilish horn was protruding out like a spear. But what was most surprising was its leg power, which easily put ordinary mountain goat to shame.

Devil Goat.

It was just as aggressive as it sounded. It never hesitated to attack others, even when they had done nothing to offend it.

Tudu, tudu!

Racing along like a horse and making a sound more terrifying than a buffalo, the Devil Goat charged towards the Golem with its horn in front. The not-so-long distance was closed in an instant.

The Golem did not dodge its attack, but blocked it with his body.

Boom!

An explosive sound roared out, and the Golem staggered. If it had

lost a bit more of its balance, it would have fallen backwards without doubt. Regardless, the Devil Goat's horn had pierced deeply into its body.

That was the Devil Goat's fatal mistake.

“Hardening!”

A shout could be heard from a distance, after which the Golem's body began to grow hard.

Surprised by the feeling from its horn, the Devil Goat struggled to pull out its horn, but in vain.

Crack, crack!

The sound of the Golem's body breaking could be heard. The goat had immense strength, but it wasn't able to pull out its horn easily.

Meanwhile...

Whoosh!

Three Black Orc Skeleton Warriors that had been waiting behind the Golem leaped up into the air, slashing down as it landed towards the Devil Goat.

Swish!

With the sound of the wind getting cut, the Skeleton Warriors made several deep cuts onto the goat's body. The Devil Goat fumed, and its eyes turned even redder. It would burst into rage at any moment.

However, a fourth Skeleton Warrior made from a Blood Goblin poured cold water over the Devil Goat's rage. When the small Skeleton Warrior landed its sword on the Devil Goat's body, three curses fell on it. The Devil Goat's speed and stats decreased, and the Skeleton Warriors didn't miss the chance to continuously hack away at the Devil Goat. The small Skeleton Warrior didn't stop either, as it continued to attack the Devil Goat.

Fuuuu!

In the end, unable to even struggle, the Devil Goat let out a strange cry as its eyes began to grow dim. Hyrkan who was watching everything from afar put away the Bone Explosive he was holding, in his pocket.

‘Good.’

When the Devil Goat finally died...

[You have leveled up.]

Hyrkan heard a message he was expecting.

‘Finally level 69.’

Hyrkan quickly checked his stats.

[Hyrkan]

-Level: 69

-Class: Magician

-Title: 34

– Stats: Strength (559) Stamina (181) Intelligence (319) / Magic Power (429)

Hyrkan did not express any joy. He simply put all of his level-up points into strength., then closed the stat window. If anyone looked, it would seem that Hyrkan was pressed in terms of time.

Dudududu!

In response to Hyrkan’s urgency, the sound of fire roared out, and Hyrkan turned towards the origin of the sound.

Boom, boom!

Hyrkan shut his mouth tightly as he heard the continued explosions.

‘The party I saw a while ago must be here.’

The thundering sound of magic was quite appropriate for the high-level hunting ground Hyrkan was currently in.

“Ehew.”

Hyrkan let out a sigh and dismantled the Devil Goat he had just caught. He unskinned the goat with impeccable skill, only taking about 20 or so seconds. Even after that, Hyrkan continued to dismantle its body before the goat’s body fully melted away.

‘No jewels.’

After checking if a jewel had dropped, Hyrkan converted the bones and skin into crafting coins. He then turned the Golem back into mud and quickly departed. His four Skeleton Warriors quickly followed along, like baby ducks and their mother.

Not too long after that...

“Hm? There’s still an ice-cream here.”

One player discovered traces of Hyrkan. The player wearing deep green armor waved his hands, and his allies quickly gathered around him.

A total of 7 players.

“Looks like someone was just here.”

They looked at the melting body of a dead monster and the nearby traces of battle.

“What’s that pile of mud over there?”

They had keen observation skills. Having played Warlord for over a year, they were at a much higher level than other players that had started playing at the same time. In Warlord, you needed skills to survive, and keen observation skill was one of them. Being able to analyze a battlefield from traces of battle was one of the few ways to develop skills to deal with sudden, unforeseen situations.

“It doesn’t look like magic. Golem Summon maybe?”

“Golem?”

It did not take long for them to piece together what had happened.

“Is there a Golem summoning necromancer nearby?”

“Necromancer?”

They went a bit further in their speculations.

“Hahoe Mask Hyrkan?”

Like talking about a Hollywood celebrity, they mentioned his name with casualty.

“Shoot. We would’ve seen him if we had come just a bit earlier.”

“So Hahoe Mask Hyrkan really is hunting in the Sura Canyon. I’ve only heard the rumors, and never seen him in person.”

“I wanted to see him fight, what a shame.”

“I’m a huge fan. I hope we can run into him again.”

One of them then made a square with his fingers and pointed towards the pile of mud used for Hyrkan’s Golem Summoning.

“Click!”

He even took a picture.

“Hey, take one with me in it!”

Another player then squatted down next to the pile of mud and posed.

At the same time, different place, while picture of Hyrkan’s pile

of mud was being uploaded to a SNS, Hyrkan changed his clothes, disguising himself as a typical swordsman class player. He also turned his Skeleton Warriors back into Skeleton Fragments.

‘Tsk tsk.’

Then, he clicked his tongue.

‘I never thought I’d run into trouble because I got too popular.’

As he continued to run, the past few dream-like days flashed by Hyrkan’s eyes.



“Eh.”

An Jaehyun noticed the signs first when he saw a familiar picture on the front page of a Warlord-related website he frequented.

‘That’s me!’

The one in the picture was none other than Hyrkan. An Jaehyun then clicked on the picture, and what first caught his attention was the headline.

[Bulkas Mountain Range’s New Boss Monster, Bear Warrior Raid

Solo Play!]

Under the title was a single video, and below that was an analyses of the battle as long as an entire research paper.

‘Whoa.’

Of course, An Jaehyun’s mind was spinning. He spent the next three minutes staring blankly at the screen. When he barely snapped out of his daze, he checked the view count of the video he uploaded.

“!”

Seeing the view count skyrocket, An Jaehyun felt a chill rather than happiness.

‘It...’

Furthermore, the countless number of emails that had been sent to his YouTube account turned the chills on his spine into icicles.

‘blew up...’

There was one thing he was certain of.

That his video had blown up.

Of course, he had already expected a high view count when he received the video from Romany. The video this time was amazing even for Hyrkan who had played and watched Warlord for a long time. The quality of the video was high for something that took only a week to make, and more importantly, the content was different than usual.

Everything was unique. The first raid of Warlord's new boss monster. A soloing necromancer! Everything that made up the video was new. An Jaehyun had originally expected a million views at the very least, and quite possibly more.

But the current success was beyond his prediction.

‘This blew up... but didn't it blow up too much?’

There was a balance between good and bad in all things. If the result went beyond expectation, there would be an equally great adverse effect. An Jaehyun knew this better than anyone else, and things had worked out just like he expected.

The video he uploaded started receiving an excessive amount of attention. The view count skyrocketed, and his video was on the front page of many well-established Warlord fan sites. It was even discussed in the Top 30 Guilds' broadcasts.

He received an unbelievable amount of free advertising. The amount of love calls he received increased equally as well. He received scouting offers from over 20 guilds from the Top 30

Guilds, and he was asked to make an appearance on their shows. He received many sponsorship offers as well, many of which came from well-known corporations and came with huge sums of money.

However, An Jaehyun couldn't just be happy. Although he smiled watching money pile in his bank account, he frowned whenever he turned away from it.

Because it was a result outside of his expectation.

‘It’s good... but it might get a bit dangerous. No, it definitely will.’

One of his goals was to gain fame, but it was too early.

‘All the crazies are going to come for sure.’

When one became famous, he became a target. The best way to gain fame was to kill a famous player. People bothered him for no reason, and these encounters ended up online for everyone to see. Even people who came with good intentions were annoying. After all, he couldn't just curse at them to go away.

‘Ugh, just thinking about it gives me a headache.’

What An Jaehyun wanted was to become famous once he hit level 100. Because at that level, most people he would see in his hunting grounds would be players nearing Ranker-class. Even if he

were to run into them, he could handle it appropriately. If they wanted to fight, he would fight them. If they wanted to negotiate, he would do so as well. At the very least, Hyrkan would have something to gain from encounters with near Ranker-class players.

Of course, Hyrkan couldn't do much about the current situation even if he complained.

‘It's not that easy to blow up like this... why do I have to go through such a trouble.’

Hyrkan was now too lucky for his own good.

However, An Jaehyun didn't know at this time, that what was in his mind currently, was nothing as compared to the hardships and suffering he would face.



‘... it really was a time of hardships and suffering.’

Thinking about the days he spent hunting in the Sura Canyon, Hyrkan sighed. He was more afraid of players than monsters, and avoided players if he could. Of course, he couldn't avoid all of them either. At times, it ended nicely, with him just having to take a picture with them. At other times, they PKed each other until only one remained.

PKs were more common of the two. After all, Hyrkan was an easy

mark. His level was definitely low for someone who was so famous, his items weren't full Unique, and most importantly, he didn't have a guild to back him up. To players thirsty for attention, Hyrkan was more valuable than any monster. Some even came to Sura Canyon to hunt him down.

Hyrkan went through all sorts of hardship in running away or fighting them. He even had to abandon Sura Canyon for a while, hunt elsewhere, then come back.

It was the hardest level-up period he had. It even reminded him of the times he ran away from the Stormhunter Guild in the past.

The fact that Hyrkan was reminiscing now meant his hardships were over.

‘I can finally breathe again.’

Level 69.

The reason he set his goal to level 69 and not level 70 was because he already had a place in mind to achieve level 70.

‘No need to be on the lookout in a dungeon.’

He was planning on achieving level 70 in the dungeon from Maoong's map. Moreover, once he hit level 70, he had planned to leave Sura Canyon for another hunting ground.

‘Once I hit level 70...’

Thinking about the hardships and suffering once again, Hyrkan smiled.

“Huhu...”

The level 70 set items he had purchased with the money from his last video. Just thinking about them made him smile.

At the same time...

“All you fuckers trying to hunt me. You’re all dead.”

A spark of rage burned inside Hyrkan.

Chapter 63. Deep Canyon Spring (2)

Sura Canyon.

After its discovery by the Red Bulls Guild, many people began to visit the Devil Goat-filled canyon. However, there were still many places unexplored by anyone.

Currently, there was no one that knew about the small spring located deep within the Sura Canyon. Even if there was, it was unlikely he would think too much about it. The fact that the spring was 30 meters deep, or that a cave could be found at that level, or that a secret area existed inside the 100-meter cave was something no one knew.

That is, until now.

“Puhu!”

Someone had discovered the secret.

After finishing up a long swim, Hyrkan inhaled a deep breath of air. Then, he crunched down on the candy in his mouth, crushing it into pieces. The 50 gold item that made one freely travel underwater disappeared just like that.

As a side note, the Undine Tear Candy tasted like a lemonade and made his breath carry the scent of lemon.

‘I’m finally here.’

After finishing up the candy completely, Hyrkan climbed out of the pool of water back to land.

When he stepped on the ground, he naturally closed his eyes and focused on hearing.

[You have entered a dungeon.]

[You have obtained the title, ‘One Who Discovered the Hidden Secret.’]

[You have obtained the title, ‘Dungeon Explorer.’]

The expected alerts popped out, and Hyrkan nodded with satisfaction.

‘I can never get used to hearing these alerts.’

Although the titles he received weren’t particularly good, but no Warlord players would refuse them.

The worth of a dungeon wasn’t just this either.

Unlike field-type hunting grounds, one could obtain additional experience points or rewards in dungeons. Discovering a secret area within the dungeon, realizing the identity of the dungeon, completely exploring the dungeon, etc. Rewards and EXP could be received based on one’s results, and the EXP received as such

bonuses was proportional to one's level. That is, the amount of EXP one could receive was limited, but there was a definite percentage gain.

It was also the reason why Hyrkan came after hitting level 69.

‘Alright, let’s get this over with.’

Hyrkan didn’t stop to dawdle and prepared himself for exploration immediately. First, he started up the Light app, making his watch light up the dark cave.

‘Let’s see...’

He could see a tunnel, one that seemed like a gigantic ant had made. Hyrkan looked around and nothing special entered his eyes.

‘It’s going to take a while to go through the entire dungeon.’

It didn’t seem like a dungeon he could completely explore in just one sitting. Time was gold, and Hyrkan wished to clear the dungeon as fast as possible. A tunnel style dungeon was an okay dungeon by Hyrkan’s standards.

‘I’ll give it a 70.’

Hyrkan was particularly good at fighting in a narrow space. His Golem could block the path and he could quickly get his Skeleton

Warriors behind the enemy by throwing the Skeleton Fragments to its back. Considering the limited space for fights, he would be facing quality over quantity. Hyrkan's Skeleton Warriors were especially good in this area.

Simulations of battles quickly flashed through Hyrkan's mind, causing him to smile. It seemed that the result of the battle he imagined was satisfactory. With his smile still intact, Hyrkan threw a Skeleton Fragment on the ground. The fragment immediately turned into a Skeleton Warrior.

The Skeleton Warrior made from a Black Orc was carrying a scimitar-like sword, and its black bones easily blended into the darkness. Hyrkan drew a cross on its forehead, and two horns sprouted out from its skull.

Madness Helm.

In addition, Hyrkan casted Bone Armor on the Skeleton Warrior. White bones filled the Skeleton Warrior's empty upper body, and its arms became covered by gauntlets. The D-Rank Bone Armor was now able to create both the breastplate and gloves.

Then, Hyrkan imbued curse magic onto the sword it was holding. Demon Curse, Slow Curse, Corrosive Ghost, and the recently learned Blind!

Once Hyrkan was done with his preparations, the Skeleton Warrior looked unlike a Skeleton Warrior. The black Skeleton Warrior wearing the white Bone Armor made it look like a knight.

Its sword, imbued with several curses, also gave off a mysterious glow.

Watching his Skeleton Warrior, Hyrkan couldn't help but smile bitterly.

‘There goes my magic power.’

As he wasn't facing a boss monster, it was a waste of mana to use so much magic power. It was unlike Hyrkan who was trying to save as much magic power as possible. In other words, his situation had taken a complete turn, as compared to when he had begun.

To replenish the lost magic power, Hyrkan began to chew on a 30 gold magic power recovery gum.

‘It's literally raising proficiency with money.’

In the past, he was frugal with his magic power due to having no money at all. Now, it was different. Although it wasn't to the point he could change his car to a sports car, he had enough to buy any skillbooks or consumable items he wanted.

Thus, Hyrkan's focus fell to raising his skills' proficiencies. The only way to do so was to use the skills repeatedly. The magic power lost because of it would then have to be filled with magic power recovery items. It was truly buying skill proficiency with money.

As such, Hyrkan couldn't help but laugh at himself.

‘You don't even eat a 3,000 won per half a gram pork in real life, but you're chewing on a 30,000 won gum in game. You are one crazy bastard.’

His laugh quickly turned into bitterness.



‘Oh?’

After entering the dungeon, Hyrkan began to explore it with his Skeleton Warrior in lead.

The tension on his face could be felt behind his hahoe mask, and it wasn't until his first encounter with a monster that his expression changed.

‘A slime?’

The monster he encountered was a slime.

Slimes were common monsters in Warlord. Although they weren't like pebbles on the side of the road, anyone could find one if they desired. However, slimes whose insides glowed was a different story.

The slime Hyrkan encountered was such a slime. Its translucent body glowed with a red light. When Hyrkan saw the slime, he knew what he was up against.

‘This is a spirit-form monster dungeon!’

Spirit-form monsters were one of the rarest monster types in Warlord. Appropriately, they were quite expensive for a rather simple reason. The items they dropped were used in creating attributed items.

Attributes were an important part of Warlord. Rich players didn’t just buy 1 item set, but rather multiple with different attributes.

Because of this, attributed items were always high in demand. A level 70 Rare item would easily go for 3,000 gold in the market. This would be the weakest item amongst them, and decent items would of course cost much more.

‘This doesn’t seem good.’

As such, Hyrkan felt an ominous foreboding before he felt happiness.

The dungeon map he luckily received had the rare spirit-form monsters?

He was incredibly lucky.

He had been lucky quite often in recent days. The view count on his Bear Warrior video was piercing through the heaven, and the crafting material he obtained sold for an enormous sum of 50,000 gold. He had expected them to go for 20 or maybe 30,000 gold, but he had ended up receiving double the amount he expected. The reason was clear. It was because the Bear Warrior was Hahoe Mask Hyrkan's first monster. The value of items changed depending on the designer and person who obtained the material. It seemed like one of Hyrkan's rich fans purchased the Bear Warrior crafting materials.

‘Aren't I just too lucky?’

Now, he was facing another incredible fortune.

‘I'm the type that the luckier I am early on, the unluckier I become later.’

Hyrkan's life had always been full of ups and downs. If he was lucky at one point, he was bound to be unlucky at another.

Hyrkan knew this better than anyone else.

As such, Hyrkan was scared how his string of incredible fortune would backfire.

Of course, his worries didn't last long. His expression quickly loosened.

‘Well, I can’t say no to this.’

It wasn’t like he could refuse thinking he’s too lucky.

‘Even if some disaster strikes me, how bad could it be? I doubt a truck would come flying through my window.’

Hyrkan walked deeper into the dungeon with joy.



After his continuous string of encounters with slimes, Hyrkan arrived at a dead-end.

In this place, he encountered a spirit-form monster as he expected.

Salanmanda.

The Salamanda was a level 80 spirit-form monster. Its body changed length from as long as 4-meters to as short as 50 centimeters depending on the situation. Its body was made of fire, and thus it could only be damaged through continuous damage over time.

Considering the forces Hyrkan had available, it wasn’t a particularly good match.

Since the Skeleton Warriors had to close in to attack, it was ill-suited to fight against the Salamanda. Even if their evasive maneuvers were good, they couldn't possibly dodge the Salamanda's body heat. The Skeleton Warriors melted under the Salamanda's intense heat, and the damage ate away at Hyrkan's magic power.

Furthermore, 'Salamanda's Rage' was activated whenever its HP fell below a certain level. Its heat then became high enough to melt even the Golem.

The Skeleton Magicians also did very little in the fight against the Salamanda. The D-rank Skeleton Magicians could only use fire-attribute magic, which obviously was ineffective against the Salamanda.

In a way, the Salamanda was a natural enemy of Hyrkan.

However, Hyrkan had one of his most peaceful battles in fighting the Salamanda.

"Good. Now cut his tail from behind! Well done!"

The battle itself was a close combat battle. Although the battle couldn't be described bloody with the lack of blood, it was still a fierce battle.

Hyrkan did not participate in the battle. He simply watched on

from the back while sucking on his candies.

He participated in just two cases. One was to imbue curse magic onto the Skeleton Warriors' sword...

“Hey, don't approach from the front, go from side. Also, stabs don't work well, so go for slashes. Got it?”

While giving commands no one could possibly understand.

The other...

“Come on, Golem. The skellies are doing well, what's wrong with you? Stop! I'll do it myself.”

Was to furiously shadow box, controlling the Golem with Copy Mode.

That was it.

Of course, he used up most of his magic recovery items because of it, but Skeleton Fragment, Golem Summon, and Skeleton Magician skill proficiencies went up greatly as a result.

Just like that, Hyrkan killed the Salamanda without swinging his Orc Hero's Sword even once. While tasting the Salamanda's strawberry flavored ice-cream, Hyrkan couldn't help but think...

‘Rich Lich... you must have had one hell of a time.’

It was the first time Hyrkan felt the joy of being a necromancer.

Chapter 64. Deep Canyon Spring (3)

Gamers often dreamt, that in their sleep, their game characters would level up and obtain items on their own. To fulfill this dream, people created macros and other bots, but they weren't enough to accomplish their dream.

It went without saying that Hyrkan dreamt of similar things. He drank coffee and ate glucose candy just for the sake of gaming. When he thought about waking up and doing the same thing again the next day, he really wished someone was there to do the job for him.

Now, however, a part of such dream had been fulfilled.

“One more bomb!”

In a 500 square meter space, Hyrkan threw a Bone Explosive amidst the Salamanda, Golem, and Skeleton Warriors.

BOOM!

With an explosive sound, the Salamanda's body was torn into pieces. However, the torn parts of its body became little Salamandas, then slowly gathered together back into its original shape. Once it reformed its body, the Salamanda glared at Hyrkan and let out its fury with a strange roar.

Whoosh!

A strong heat emitted out from the Salamanda's body.

However, before the heat could reach Hyrkan, Hyrkan's Golem blocked its path. With the Golem as shield, Hyrkan stood relaxed as he snapped his fingers twice. His Skeleton Warriors immediately made their move.

The heat was strong enough to melt their Bone Armors. However, the Skeleton Warriors didn't know things such as fear. The Skeleton Warriors piercing through the heat, approached the Salamanda's rear, and slashed down with their swords.

Whish!

Along with the sound of air being cut, the Salamanda's tail was cut off. The Salamanda turned around and let out another roar.

Hearing this roar, Hyrkan smiled and threw in another candy in his mouth. The rich chocolaty flavor melted in his mouth, and the smile on his face became even richer.

'God, I love this.'

3 days had passed since he entered the dungeon, and Hyrkan spent his days the same. He explored the dungeon, killed any monsters that came out, logged out once he fulfilled his quota, rested in the real world, then logged back in. In this process, the only monsters he met were slimes and salamandas.

In a way, it was quite boring.

However, these were some of Hyrkan's happiest days.

'It's just so relaxing.'

Although he killed many monsters during these 3 days, no monsters were strong enough to force Hyrkan to fight on the front lines. He simply ate candies, chewed on gums, and drank soda in the back. What was even more surprising was that even with how much he was spending, he wasn't in the red. It was all thanks to the Salamanda's Essence. Its expensive drop went for quite a lot in the market.

There was an even happier news.

[Skeleton Fragment skill rank rose to B.]

[Bone Armor skill rank rose to C.]

[Demon Curse skill rank rose to C.]

He successfully ranked up three of his skills.

Of course, it wasn't just from this dungeon run. The skills had been accumulating EXP for quite some time. It was just that this dungeon run gave them the final push to cross over to the next rank.

For Hyrkan, however, they felt like more gifts from the dungeon.

‘I wish I could hunt like this forever.’

These were the happy days.

And the dungeon left him with one final gift.



Dungeons often required players to search for hidden areas, causing players to waste quite a bit of their time. In the worst case, a dungeon run may have been worse than normally hunting in the field.

As such, there were tips for finding hidden areas in dungeons. The most representative one was to use fire. If air flowed inside the dungeon, the flame would respond to the air’s movements.

Using this method, Hyrkan was able to find the hidden area right away.

‘No waste of time, I like it.’

Seeing the flame dance along the invisible air, Hyrkan couldn’t help but smile.

Things couldn't get better than how they currently were. Hyrkan read the air's movement right away and reached a dead-end. Then, he stabbed his Orc Hero's Sword into the wall.

Clang!

The wall made a rigid sound, and Hyrkan simply kicked down the wall as if it was the most normal thing to do. The wall crumbled and an iron door could be seen behind it. It was 3 meters high and 2 meters wide. Strange runic shapes were drawn on the door. Hyrkan carefully grabbed the door handle.

Click!

At that instant...

[Would you like to enter the stage?]

An alert popped up.

'An instance dungeon.'

It was an alert for an instance dungeon. Without opening the door, Hyrkan took his hands off the door handle.

'That would mean the dungeon's boss is behind this door.'

One had to enter instance dungeons with a conviction.

‘I wonder what’s behind it.’

Currently, Hyrkan didn’t even know what type of monster was behind the door. He had used most of his consumable items as well. Although he still had a lot left, it wasn’t enough for Hyrkan to bet 48 hours of his time.

Hyrkan backed off.

‘Looks like... he’ll be the sacrifice to my level 70.’

Hyrkan then headed to the Sura Canyon Village to prepare himself.



Resting stops for players didn’t exist in all hunting grounds. As such, players often created one on their own when the game system didn’t provide one for them. Areas created in this way were called villages. When a player held enough authority to order NPCs, he or she could assign NPCs to villages and operate them in a more systematic way. However, this would not happen for some time to come.

Moreover, villages were created in flat lands where there were no trees. This was because even if one cleared the trees, they would come back during a field reset.

The Sura Canyon Village was located near the entrance of the Sura Canyon, which was more or less a wasteland. The players gathered here were mostly silent. The only times things would get rowdy were when a group of players running from monsters arrived without having lost them. In such cases, the players gathered at the village worked together to exterminate all the monsters. Other than such circumstances, players simply traded items and information, or gathered party or guild members.

Moreover, in villages, items were sold for higher or lower than the market price. It was as realistic as it came with the seller adjusting to the demand.

'25 percent higher than the market price... I think this every time I come here, but this would be my job if I didn't have to level up.'

And as realistic as it was, foul language was often exchanged in the process.

It was the same for Hyrkan.

Checking out the price tag on the items, Hyrkan made a sour expression. On the other hand, the player selling the items made a big smile. To him, it seemed like Hyrkan would fill up his pocket for quite some time to come.

"Is there a discount if I buy in bulk?"

“Of course! It depends on how much you buy.”

“I want to buy some magic power recovery candy.”

“Then I can’t give that big of a discount. As you know, they’re quite high in demand.”

“I want to buy them in thousand-gold units, so how about a 10 percent discount?”

“Come on, I won’t be left with anything with a 10 percent discount. This is all I can do.”

With that, the merchant opened his palm, and Hyrkan’s expression turned sour. Currently, Hyrkan was more worried about wasting time negotiating than wasting money. However, even a rich person couldn’t buy something much higher than its market value.

‘Well, this is probably the best I’m going to get.’

Hyrkan knew what he was buying wasn’t ordinary consumables. They filled up a very small size, yet were very effective. It was hard to find them when they were low in supply, and he would have to go all the way to a castle to do so. And if he did, it would take a full day for the round trip.

“This and this.”

Hyrkan picked out more items to buy, and seeing the automatically calculated price, the merchant jumped in surprise.

“Wow, you’re buying a lot. I’ll cut the price a bit more.”

“Why not a lot while you’re at it?”

“Hold on. Let me calculate...”

While these two were making their trade...

“This village is doing better than I thought.”

“Chev, you sound like some king whenever you say that.”

“Do I? Sorry, I didn’t mean to.”

“No need to be sorry. It was a compliment.”

“Well, thanks for the compliment then.”

Two players in typical level 80 armor were strolling through the Sura Canyon Village.

It was the Red Bulls’ guild master, Matador Chev, and his

secretary, Yel.

Although he was one of the most famous players in Warlord, no one was able to recognize him. He was wearing a helmet and Yel was also wearing a hoody. Although such looks would garner strange gazes in the real world, they were one of the most common fashions in Warlord.

As such, Chev was able to look around easily, checking out the players nearby. Realizing Chev's actions, Yel asked a question.

“Are you looking for someone?”

“I was thinking maybe I'll meet someone I know.”

“If there was someone famous enough for you to know, then we would have heard about it already.”

“That's not entirely true.”

“There's someone in your mind?”

“Hahoe Mask Hyrkan.”

Hahoe Mask Hyrkan. When his name was mentioned, Yel frowned, and replied in a chic manner.

“I don’t get why everyone thinks he’s all that. He was just lucky enough to be the first one to kill a boss monster.”

Chev corrected her.

“First, and by himself.”

Yel’s frown became even more noticeable at Chev’s reply.

“Chev, you can solo a monster like that on your own, right now.”

“But not if I was at Hahoe Mask Hyrkan’s level. Anyone can kill a monster lower level than them.”

“Hmph. Who knows, maybe he’s hiding his real level? It’s not like it’s unprecedented.”

“Well, you’re not wrong.”

At Yel’s continued retorts, Chev grinned lightly and stopped talking about Hahoe Mask Hyrkan. He didn’t see the need to argue with Yel.

However, what was on his mind was completely different.

‘Even if he did lie about his level, it can’t be that high. Moreover, his battle ability and battle sense, and his ability to appear on

camera. Those have nothing to do with his level. He's not just good at this game. He's charmingly good.'

Hahoe Mask Hyrkan was someone all of the Top 30 Guilds were looking out for. That was how valuable he was. Someone like him was enough to have his own show on a broadcast channel. Putting aside his ability, he had something unique. That was the most important thing. He wasn't just good at fighting, he possessed a unique charm that drew people to watch him.

When Chev first heard that Hahoe Mask Hyrkan had appeared at the Sura Canyon, he thought it was an opportunity. After all, the only place players could trade items were the Sura Canyon Village operated by the Red Bulls Guild. No matter how well he hid his tail, Chev thought it was only a matter of time before they tracked him down.

And when he was caught, Chev planned to make a deal.

'Even if I can't make him join Red Bulls, I'd like to at least form a partnership.'

In truth, Chev had little hopes of Hyrkan joining his guild. Considering how Hahoe Mask had been acting so far, he wasn't the type to accept an offer to join a guild. No, most people were sure that he was already part of a guild or an organization. Otherwise, it was impossible to show the results he had so far.

Because of this, Chev wanted to form a friendship with him. He was sure that would be enough for him to benefit in some way. At

the very least, it would be better than being his enemy. Most importantly, as Hahoe Mask continues to make a name for himself, the Top 30 Guilds would have no choice but to pay attention to him. It was entirely possible for them to clash with him at some point. Without previous communication, such things could happen quite easily in Warlord. At the same time, with previous communication, such things could be avoided.

Of course, Chev wasn't here just to meet Hahoe Mask Hyrkan. His real objective was joining the level 150 boss raid that was happening secretively past the Sura Canyon.

‘He wasn’t that big. About as big as him, was it?’

Chev was simply making best use of his time.

This was when a conversation entered his ears.

“3,900 gold.”

“Just a bit more, eh?”

“Sorry, but this is the best I can do. If you want me to cut any more, you’ll have to go down to the Rito Castle.”

“Then I’ll give you 4,000 gold, so how about you add 10kg more of the recovery clay?”

“Recovery clays are 20 gold per kilo, think about it...”

“Think of it as a service. It’s not so easy to make 4,000 gold in a single deal, you know?”

“...fine. 4,000 gold for 10kg recovery clay and more.”

“Call.”

It was a negotiation one could find anywhere, but hearing the negotiated price, Chev stared at the two like a snake.

It wasn’t that he was particularly interested in their trade.

‘If it’s Hahoe Mask, he should use a lot of consumables when he hunts. If I narrow down my search by looking at people who buy in bulk...’

Chev felt like he stumbled on a clue, and he couldn’t help but smile.

Of course, Chev had no way to know. That the one who gave him the clue was the one he was looking for.



Past the Deep Canyon Spring and the winding tunnels, Hyrkan

once again arrived in front of the iron door.

‘4,000 gold for what I can buy with 3,400 at the castle. That’s 600,000 won just out the window.’

Even if he was overflowing with money, he couldn’t help but laugh considering how poorly he was living in the real world. 600,000 won was enough to feed him for 3 full months, and he had just spent it to save some time. As a result, Hyrkan had a new goal in mind.

‘Once I become the best in Warlord... I’ll have yukhoe for breakfast, bulgogi for lunch, and steak for dinner.’

Meanwhile, Hyrkan’s hands moved proficiently. He stuffed recovery candy, gum, and clay in several hidden pockets of his armor.

It was so that he could take them out and consume them quickly in battle. Being able to hide consumables was a skill on its own right. If he stored all of his consumables in one pocket, he could simply lose the pocket and his life. In raid videos, there were always idiots who kept all their consumables in one pocket and died because of it.

As such, experienced players hid consumable items in multiple places of their body like a squirrel hid his acorns.

Finally, Hyrkan checked his item slots.

The Skeleton Snake set he was wearing was a level 50 set, but he had prepared another item set that greatly increased his fire resistance.

‘Good thing I got this right too.’

Since Salamandas had appeared in the dungeon, it was likely that the boss monster would be a fire attribute monster as well. Because of this, he bought the extra set at a higher price than normal.

Hyrkan then placed his hand on the door handle, and slowly pulled on it.

[Would you like to enter the stage?]

Hyrkan answered.

“I’m going to go hit level 70!”

Chapter 65. Skill ‘Armament’ (1)

A group of fully armed Skeleton Warriors walked along a clean path with lights on their heads. Behind them, Hyrkan carefully followed, tightly holding onto his sword.

‘This design isn’t one where a spirit would spawn.’

The moment Hyrkan opened the door and entered the instance dungeon, he had a feeling.

That the monster he would be facing wasn’t a pure spirit-type monster like the Salamanda.

It wasn’t a random feeling either. If the tunnel he was in before had a farm-like feel, the place he was in currently had a research lab-like feel.

The most important part of that the path was clean. If it was dirty, then it would have been likely for spirit-type monsters to spawn. It would have meant that spirit-type monsters who couldn’t endure the laboratory testing revolted and took over the lab.

But since the place Hyrkan was in was perfectly clean, it didn’t mean monsters took over the place. Then, the guardian protecting the dungeon must be waiting for him somewhere.

Such fine details were what made Warlord so charming as a

game.

Unfortunately, it wasn't a good news for Hyrkan.

‘Did I buy a fire-resistant set for nothing?’

Hyrkan had bought a fire-resistant set for higher than the market price because he thought he would have to face against spirit-type monsters. Although it wouldn't be too big of a loss if he sold the set, he would still end up with a loss.

‘What a waste of money.’

Hyrkan walked and calculated the loss in his head. After about 10 minutes, the path he was taking led him to a large room. 1000 square meter area with about 10 meters to the ceiling. It was a large area, and the walls were filled with sword marks.

‘Ah.’

The moment Hyrkan saw the sword marks, he realized what the guardian of the dungeon was. When he saw the armor in the center of the dungeon, he was sure of his guess. The armor made for a large, 2-meter tall man looked like an armor from the medieval era. It was vastly different than the armor players wore, which focused on making them look better.

Of course, Hyrkan didn't care how cool the armor looked like.

‘Bad memories pop up just when you think you forgot them.’

The good news was that Hyrkan had fought against this monster several times before. The bad news was that he had been killed by this monster as well.

‘So this is the place was where they created Spirit Knights.’

The moment Hyrkan discovered the armor, the armor had also discovered Hyrkan.

-Eliminating intruder

With a robotic sound, a stream of fire began to flow inside the armor.

Soon, the armor became filled with fire as it began to move.

Clack, clack!

The monster making the metallic sound and overflowing with fire was none other than the Spirit Knight. It was an artificially created monster that used the power of spirits to operate its armor. Its level changed depending on the spirit used as material. Since Hyrkan had killed level 80 Salamandas, the Spirit Knight here was likely to be above level 90.

The important thing to note was the Spirit Knight's special trait.

‘Just my luck.’

Because it utilized the power of spirits, the Spirit Knight was immune to all debuff magic. That is, it was not affected by curse magic.

At the same time, there was no such thing as a critical hit. Just like how spirits had to be killed through continuous damage over time, the Spirit Knight had to be killed in the same way.

Finally, it was strong. It was one of the strongest monsters amongst the mid-small sized monsters of its level. The secret behind its strength was its high artificial intelligence. If most monsters fought like wild animals, the Spirit Knight fought like, its name suggested, a knight. Some players compared fighting the Spirit Knight as playing chess. Plus, the Spirit Knight used the high-tier skill, Sword Reinforcement. The cooldown time was 50 seconds, and it was an incredibly strong skill.

A battle with the Spirit Knight was sometimes used to estimate a player's strength. Average players could not win against a Spirit Knight. It wasn't easy for above average players either. Tankers especially hated facing up against the Spirit Knight. When players raised their shields, most monsters attacked on top of the shield. However, the Spirit Knight avoided the shield and went for any gaps the players had.

Hyrkan had been killed by the Spirit Knight as well. Of course, at

that time, the difference between their spec was just too big. Hyrkan was around level 100 when he first ran into a Spirit Knight. The Spirit Knight he was facing was level 160. No matter how strong Hyrkan was, it was impossible to cover a gap of 60 levels. The fact that Hyrkan was able to be its match for a while was impressive.

In any case, the Spirit Knight wasn't an easy opponent as Hyrkan currently was.

“Hmph.”

However, Hyrkan had no intention of avoiding the battle. He didn't have a choice either. There was only one way to leave the instance dungeon. Hyrkan or the Spirit Knight. One of them had to die.

Since Hyrkan had no plans of dying, he could only kill.

‘Let's do this.’

Snap snap!

When Hyrkan snapped his fingers twice, the Skeleton Warrior that had been waiting for his order charged towards the Spirit Knight.

Powered by the Bone Armor and Madness Helm, the Skeleton Warriors fearlessly flew towards the Spirit Knight. The Spirit

Knight did not waver either.

Chwing!

It pulled out its sword, and at the appropriate moment, it sidestepped the Skeleton Warrior's vertical slash, and swung its sword in return.

Clack!

With the sound of bones breaking, the Skeleton Warrior's Bone Armor broke apart around its shoulders. It was a frightening blow. However, with the effect of the Madness Helm, the Skeleton Warrior was unaffected, as it immediately attacked the Spirit Knight again.

However, its aggressiveness was a poison rather than a medicine.

Whish!

The Spirit Knight dodged the Skeleton Warrior's sword and counterattacked. The Skeleton Warrior wasn't able to fully dodge the Spirit Knight's attack, ending up with another fatal injury.

'This won't work against that guy.'

The battle style Hyrkan taught his Skeleton Warriors was the dodge-first-attack-second style. Since most monsters attacked

aggressively first, this method worked well.

However, the Spirit Knight had the intelligence to dodge and counterattack, just like his Skeleton Warriors.

It only attacked first when it knew it had the advantage.

Moreover, the Skeleton Warrior's evasive ability depended on Hyrkan's stats, and as such, it was difficult for the Skeleton Warriors to dodge the Spirit Knight's attacks like a slippery eel.

‘The Golem...’

Then how about the Golem?

‘would be useless too.’

The Golem would be even more useless. The Golem was even slower than the Skeleton Warrior, and it would only serve as a punching bag for the Spirit Knight.

While Hyrkan was judging the situation, his Skeleton Warrior had become ragged. Even its Bone Armor couldn't withstand the brutal assault of the Spirit Knight.

“Whew.”

Watching this scene, Hyrkan made his decision.

‘It’s about time I do my job.’

It was now up to Hyrkan. Besides him, no one could fight the Spirit Knight on the front lines.

After throwing two Skeleton Fragments on the ground, Hyrkan charged towards the Spirit Knight.



Hyrkan held his sword with both his hands and swung horizontally towards the Spirit Knight’s left side. On the other hand, the Spirit Knight, holding its sword single-handedly, swung its sword down diagonally to block Hyrkan’s sword.

The two swords met...

Clang!

And let out an ear-splitting sound.

Creek, creek!

The sound of the two blades grinding against each other was terrifying and hard to listen to.

During their clash, Hyrkan was the one to be on retreat. His sword was being pushed back in its path. Seeing the Spirit Knight win against him in power with just one hand, Hyrkan couldn't help but feel a headache.

‘Geez.’

It was a clear proof that his stats weren't comparable to the Spirit Knight. This wasn't the only proof either. The numerous cuts on Hyrkan's body and armor also served as proof. Of course, Hyrkan wasn't the only one in a sorry state. The Spirit Knight's armor also had clear signs of a fierce battle.

What was certain was that this was the most fierce, intense battle Hyrkan has had so far.

‘I barely survived. Thank god I learned this skill.’

The only reason Hyrkan was still alive was due to a body modification skill he obtained recently – ‘False Heart.’ It raised his total HP by 20 percent, and together with Skin Sewing and Bone Armor, it greatly raised his survivability. Without them, he surely would have died.

While Hyrkan was drawing the Spirit Knight's aggro, three Skeleton Warriors jumped towards the Sprit Knight. As soon as the Spirit Knight caught sight of them, it put more strength into its sword and pushed Hyrkan backwards. Then, it turned around to face the Skeleton Warriors.

‘Okay.’

After staggering for a brief moment, Hyrkan found his balance again. His eyes were fixed at the Spirit Knight’s left shoulder pad, which was already half-broken. Hyrkan didn’t hesitate. The moment the Spirit Knight used Sword Reinforcement and swung its sword at the three Skeleton Warriors, cutting them in half...

Crack!

Hyrkan cut off the Spirit Knight’s left arm.

Puhat!

Instead of blood, intense flame spewed out from where the arm was cut off.

Hyrkan immediately backed off. Meanwhile, two of the Skeleton Warriors that had been cut in half reformed themselves and stood up. Surrounded, the Spirit Knight stared at Hyrkan and turned to look at the Skeleton Warriors.

‘It’s time for the finale.’

Hyrkan immediately made an estimation.

Sword Reinforcement was still on cooldown for some time.

He had two Skeleton Warriors left, and he could use one of them as bait to deliver one more blow. One attack for one Skeleton Warrior. Although it was a losing trade, it would be worth it if it meant he could finish the fight.

Hyrkan snapped his fingers and gave the signal. Having finished absorbing Hyrkan's mana to recover, the Skeleton Warriors charged towards the Spirit Knight. The Spirit Knight stared at the Skeleton Warriors closing in on itself.

Watching this scene, Hyrkan estimated the timing.

‘Not yet.’

Not yet, not yet, not yet.

‘Now!’

The moment he grasped the timing, Hyrkan charged. The charging power from his high strength stat and ‘Leg Strength Modification’ passive skill was unbelievably high. In an instant, he closed the distance between the Spirit Knight and himself.

Meanwhile, the Skeleton Warriors that had already reached the Spirit Knight raised their arms and swung down. It was impossible for the Spirit Knight to block all of the attacks at the same time.

At the same time, it had no intention to block the two Skeleton Warriors' attacks.

It ignored their attacks and turned around, swinging its sword along with the centrifugal force from spinning.

Whish!

Its sword flew towards the charging Hyrkan.

In that instant, underneath the hahoe mask of Hyrkan and underneath the helmet of the Spirit Knight, their gazes met. Although not much had changed, it seemed like Hyrkan's eyes were dark while the Spirit Knight's eyes were bright.

'You fucker...'

In its moment of danger, the Sprit Knight's excellent artificial intelligence had ordered him to attack the most threatening target. It was something completely unexpected even for Hyrkan.

Of course, Hyrkan didn't have any way of dealing with the attack. Although he reflexively moved his body, it didn't have much meaning in such a situation.

Chwing!

The Spirit Knight's sword destroyed Hyrkan's Bone Armor and

Skeleton Armor, pierced through his Skin Sewing, and sent Hyrkan flying towards the wall.

When he landed, he continued to roll on the ground several times.

The Spirit Knight didn't stop there. It ignored the attacks from the Skeleton Warriors and flung its body towards Hyrkan. It planned to use this opportunity to kill the most fearsome foe.

Meanwhile, Hyrkan summoned the Golem.

Most players would have been taken out before they even understood what had happened.

However, Hyrkan knew what he had to do even amidst the chaos of battle.

The summoned Golem began to take shape, and became a wall blocking the path of the Spirit Knight. The single-armed Spirit Knight didn't stop upon seeing the Golem, but instead raised its sword up high. It planned to finish off the Golem before it could fully take shape. The Golem would not be able to last more than a few seconds.

In those few seconds, Hyrkan had to recover as much as he could with his recovery items.

Hyrkan did so almost instinctively. He reached into the pocket on

his waist and grabbed a hand-full of recovery clay. After applying it on his injuries, he took out an extremely expensive HP recovery candy from one of his hidden pockets and threw it in his mouth. Without savoring its taste, he chewed on it and gulped it down.

“Huuu...”

Hyrkan then got up and let out a long sigh. His expression was frozen and rigid. From his mouth which was barely visible underneath the hahoe mask, he mumbled.

“You’re fucking dead.”

The Spirit Knight’s blow had awakened the sleeping Hero Slaughterer inside Hyrkan.

Chapter 66. Skill ‘Armament’ (2)

“I’ve always been curious. Do you mind?”

“Go ahead.”

“What’s on your mind when you’re fighting monsters? You always charge at them so thoughtlessly.”

It was about the time when he was at level 100. Along with Kim Dongsoo and other members of the Hahoe Mask Guild, Hyrkan had gained experience, levels, fame, and achievements. During this time when they were able to earn enough to make a living, Hyrkan, the Hahoe Mask Guild’s ace player, had been killed during battle.

It was the result of a reckless battle. The Hahoe Mask Guild had to rest for 48 hours as a result, and Kim Dongsoo took the time to have a drink with An Jaehyun.

When Kim Dongsoo asked An Jaehyun the above question, An Jaehyun answered.

“Mm... if I don’t kill this guy, I won’t get to eat tomorrow. Something like that.”

“Haha...”

When he heard An Jaehyun's answer, Kim Dongsoo let out a dry laugh as he poured more drink into An Jaehyun's glass. The reason Kim Dongsoo didn't pry further was that he took An Jaehyun's answer as a signal that he didn't want to talk more about it. However, that wasn't the case.

It was the cold hard truth.

An Jaehyun, or rather Hyrkan, did not put much thought into his fights. He wasn't able to either. By nature, there were too many ways a fight could go wrong. He couldn't fight with every possibility in mind.

In the end, all he could do was remind himself of his resolve.

The answer Hyrkan gave was his resolve.

There would be no dinner if he didn't kill the monster in front of him!

As much as it was foolish, simple, and ridiculous, it had a good effect. Although this resolve sometimes sent him to forced 48-hour vacations, it mostly helped him achieve his goals.

One of these results was his title, Hero Slaughterer.

'Skeletons are just assistants. I've been taking things easy for too long.'

At this moment, Hyrkan reminded himself of this resolve once again. Then, he held up his Orc Hero's Sword.

‘Someone who just sits back isn't Hyrkan.’

Hyrkan then charged towards the Spirit Knight who had turned his Golem into a ragged doll.

The Spirit Knight immediately reacted to Hyrkan's appearance. He faced Hyrkan and swung down with his sword diagonally.

Up until now, Hyrkan had faced the Spirit Knight's attacks head on. If he did, his Skeleton Warriors would attack in his stead. Rather than dodging the Spirit Knight's attack, he performed the role of controlling him.

This time, however, Hyrkan dodged the attack.

Narrowly.

He tilted his body to the side slightly, and he could clearly feel the Spirit Knight's sword brush past him.

This was Hyrkan's original battle style. It was just that he had forgotten about it due to the convenience provided by his Skeleton Warriors. It was the Spirit Knight that had let him remember what he had forgotten for so long.

The Spirit Knight had awoken the Hero Slaughterer Hyrkan that was sleeping within Hahoe Mask Hyrkan.

After dodging the Spirit Knight's attack, Hyrkan struck its side with his sword.

Clang!

A metallic noise rang out as a clear sword cut appeared on its armor. However, the armor wasn't cut apart completely, showing the Spirit Knight's formidable defense.

As such, after successfully cutting the Spirit Knight once, he brushed past it and turned around.

Whish.

The Spirit Knight also turned to face Hyrkan.

“Hu!”

With a short breath of air, he once again ran towards the Spirit Knight. The Spirit Knight swung its sword, and Hyrkan once again narrowly dodged its attack as he made another sword cut on its armor.

Exchanging one attack for another.

Hyrkan's plan was to exchange tens or even hundreds of such attacks.

Of these, if he got hit three or four times, it would be game over. One mistake could potentially be fatal. Any hidden cards the Spirit Knight was holding would be detrimental to Hyrkan, and it was entirely possible that this battle would end up as a disaster for Hyrkan.

However, Hyrkan did not worry about what could be.

‘If I don’t kill him, I won’t have dinner tomorrow!’

Such thoughts weren’t suited for the Hero Slaughterer.



[You have obtained the title, ‘Knighthood.’]

The moment he heard the alert, Hyrkan took out his recovery clay and began to heal his left arm that was about to fall off. After applying the recovery clay onto the severed area, he could feel his left arm moving again.

It was truly a game-like scene.

Hyrkan then turned his head towards pieces of armor that lied

fallen on the ground. The traces of a fierce battle were scattered about on the ground.

Watching the parts of the broken armor, Hyrkan grinned.

“Kya!”

Hyrkan let out a scream of joy.

‘I really am the best.’

This was it.

The sight of himself fighting against the odds and coming out victorious. That was the Hyrkan he enjoyed seeing.

Of course, there was one thing he wasn’t quite satisfied with.

‘As I thought, there is a slight delay with the V-Gear I have now.’

Now that he had fought with his all, he had felt something he quite haven’t felt before.

His V-Gear’s Level.

‘Level 6 would be too much. Would a Level 3 do for now?’

Hyrkan's currently V-Gear was the standard Level 1 Model. Currently, the Level 6 V-Gear was about to be released. The difference between Level 1 and Level 6 wasn't so big, but there was a noticeable difference if a skilled player was using them.

Of course, the difference in their performance could only be felt when a player was performing to the limit of his capabilities.

‘But since I’m able to feel the difference now, it looks like my sense of battle is nearing what it was at my prime.’

This meant that Hyrkan's senses had come back to what it was during his prime. The feeling he couldn't quite remember even with the continued Climbing Tests had come back thanks to the Spirit Knight.

Watching the remnant of the Spirit Knight, Hyrkan couldn't help but smile.

‘This guy sells for quite a lot too.’

What he was happy about were the items the Spirit Knight would drop.

Spirit Knights' dropped crafting coins called the Spirit Knight Armor Piece, and because they could hold the power of spirits, they were used to create high-tier attribute-resistant armor.

Considering the Spirit Knight was also level 90, the items it would drop would at least be at the level 70 range. Hyrkan's gain would be well over his expenditure.

Hyrkan immediately turned the armor into crafting coins, pocketed them, and turned towards the exit.

‘It's time to finish this.’

The Spirit Knight was the guardian of the dungeon, and now that it was gone, it meant he was free to loot the place as he desired.

Hyrkan gazed at the new, unexplored part as he smiled.



Soon, Hyrkan found himself in a shabby room filled with two wooden desks and three bookshelves. Although there were dozens of books in the bookshelves, most were completely useless novels based on Warlord's world setting. Although there were players who enjoyed reading about such things, Hyrkan wasn't one of them.

In the first place, Hyrkan knew about the Warlord world better than anyone else.

He knew who the Immoral Prince was, and also the identity of the Ruined Kingdom that would be revealed when the Immoral Prince was captured.

‘Is this it?’

Hyrkan quickly skimmed through the books.

“Whoa!”

Then, when Hyrkan finally found what he was looking for, his eyes sparkled. It was a book with a palm print but no words.

‘A skillbook!’

It was a skillbook.

Furthermore, what Hyrkan had obtained was a No-name Skillbook. Once he placed his left hand on the palm print, a random skill would be materialized based on the player’s class.

The skill could then be learned by the player, or he could sell it to others as a skillbook. Most of the skillbooks on the market were created in this way. This was also the reason why necromancer skillbooks were rare. A necromancer skillbook neither was guaranteed to sell well, nor were there enough necromancers to flood the market with them.

Of course, it was possible to sell the No-name Skillbook, but most did not do so. Even Normal-rank skillbooks sold for a good amount, and skillbooks from No-name Skillbooks had the potential

to be Rare-rank or even Unique-rank. No person would hesitate to open a treasure chest that guaranteed riches. There were people who just sold No-name Skillbooks for a high price, but doing so was like buying lottery tickets.

Without hesitation, Hyrkan placed his hand on the palm print. He wasn't so worried about money anymore, so there was no reason for him to agonize over what to do.

[The skillbook reveals its identity.]

Hyrkan immediately received an alert, then another in quick succession.

[Would you like to learn the skill, 'Armament'?]

'Mm?'

At that instant, Hyrkan couldn't help but take his hand off the skillbook in surprise. Staring at the skillbook in his hand, Hyrkan asked.

'Don't tell me...'

Then, he placed his hand on the palm print once again. The same alert popped up and Hyrkan once again took his hand off the skillbook.

“Armament...”

‘Is it that skill?’

Hyrkan wasn't entirely knowledgeable on the necromancer skill tree. There was limited information on how many skills necromancers had, what the conditions were for obtaining them, or what the skills exactly did. Although he bought information from Helgen early in the game, Hyrkan was now far more knowledgeable than Helgen.

As a result, Hyrkan could only think about Rich Lich's raid videos to infer what the skills he used were. What Hyrkan was most curious about were the armed states of Rich Lich's skeletons.

At first, Hyrkan thought they were wearing something like the Bone Armor. However, he quickly found out after using Bone Armor himself that this wasn't the case. Hyrkan then wondered if it was because Rich Lich used a different monster as material, but that theory was also quickly debunked as Hyrkan tried out different monsters to craft Skeleton Fragments.

In the end, he could only conclude that Rich Lich had another skill.

Most important was the fact that Rich Lich's skeletons were holding excellent weapons.

But from what Hyrkan tried, Skeleton Warriors couldn't use the

weapons their master used. They couldn't use the weapons taken from other monsters either. This could only mean that there was a skill that allowed them to use players' weapons.

Gulp!

Hyrkan swallowed his breath.

'Is it really possible?'

Hyrkan imagined his Skeleton Warriors holding the Orc Hero's Sword.

Hyrkan let out another breath of air. Then, he pulled up the skill details onto a hologram window.



The Red Bulls Guild held absolute control over the Sura Canyon Village. Being targeted by the Red Bulls Guild meant one shouldn't even consider stepping one foot into the Sura Canyon Village.

The merchants that traded there had to pay a fee to the Red Bulls Guild, and had to submit a proof of identity to them. Although it wasn't so serious like having to show one's social security number, players known for being bad mannered had no chance of being accepted.

It was the same for a player named Koten.

The moment he saw the Red Bulls Guild's announcement asking for information on a player who purchased a large number of items by himself, Koten gave them all the information he had.

"You said he purchased 4,000 golds-worth at once?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you remember exactly how he looked like?"

"Well you see... I'm not too good at remembering faces... but he was definitely Asian."

"Anything else?"

"Mm... I don't know if this is the right way to put it, but he seemed like a pushover."

"A pushover?"

"You know what I mean, right? It's like if you see them, you immediately think 'I can trick that guy even if I'm not a con-artist.' That's the kind of guy I'm talking about. Of course, he wasn't a real pushover. He knew what he was doing when we were trading. Not that I would have tricked him anyways, but you know what I mean."

‘We already knew that Hahoe Mask Hyrkan was Asian, and likely Korean... but he looks like a pushover?’

“Damn, how do I report this?”

In the end, the Red Bulls ended up without much lead on Hahoe Mask Hyrkan.

Chapter 67. Skill ‘Armament’ (3)

[Armament]

– Skill Level : Rank F

– Skill Instruction : You can give an item in your possession to the Skeleton Magician as well as the Skeleton Warrior. As proficiency increases, an increased variety of items could be given to the mage under the Skeleton Warrior.

-Other : The weapon given to the mage as well as the Skeleton Warrior will become one with the weapon. The mage as well as the Skeleton Warrior has to be summoned to withdraw the weapon’s right.

The hologram window displayed the Armament Skill’s description, and Hyrkan removed his Hahoe mask. Then he carefully looked over the description of the skill, and he watched the video regarding the use of the skill.

Afterwards, Hyrkan swallowed his exclamation.

‘An incredible one showed up.’

Armament Skill.

It’ll allowed the Skeleton Mage as well as the Skeleton Warrior to

become incredibly strong. In one fell swoop, the skill would make the Mage into a powerful being.

‘It really is an incredible one.....’

At the same time, it was a skill that required a steep price.

‘A skill that’ll put an incredible dent into my account books has showed up.’

At that moment, Hyrkan wasn’t filled purely of happiness. He started earnestly calculating the figures.

‘So how much do I have to spend?’

Currently, level 70 Rare rank weapons with decent options were traded between the price of 500 to 1000 gold. Of course, Rare rank items like the Orc Hero’s Sword, which was closer to the Unique rank, was traded at a much more expensive price.

‘First, the number of Skeletons I could summon.....’

This was Hyrkan’s current Rank of skills related to Skeleton Summoning.

[Skeleton Fragment Rank B], [Skeleton Study Rank D], [Skeleton Magician Rank D].

There were 5 Skeleton Warriors able to be summoned through the Skeleton Fragment Rank B. Skeleton Study Rank D's effect allowed him to summon an additional 3 Skeletons. The effect of Skeleton Magician Rank D allowed him to summon two more. The Corrupt Pursuer's Necklace allowed for an additional summon with its effect. If he only summoned the Skeleton Warriors, he could summon 11 of them at most.

What if he added these two factors?

“Hoo-oo!”

Hyrkan's mouth let out a sigh as his complicated emotions were mixed in with it.

This skill wouldn't arm the entire body yet. It'll just allow it to take up a decent weapon. Hyrkan needed much more money than the security deposit for his one room. Moreover, as the Armament Skill proficiency increases, he would need more money. When he thought about the breastplate, greave, shoulder, boots, and shield....

Of course, it was possible to resell the weapons he purchased later on. However, he wouldn't be able to get the full price for what he paid for. It would impact on how much profit he would bring in. However, it wouldn't affect Hyrkan's way of life too much.

The important thing was deciding whether he wanted to spend a lot of time selling and purchasing items. If not, he had to secure

enough funds where he'll be able to purchase the items in bulk.

Hyrkan stopped thinking at this point. If he thought any more, it felt as if a hole would form in his stomach.

‘.....for the foreseeable future, it'll be protein powders, cheap coffees, and grape-flavored candies.’

Hyrkan let out a bitter laugh.

‘I can understand how a head of the household feels when he has to save money to be able to support his children and wife.’

In the entirety of his life, he had never married anyone. Moreover, he hadn't dated either. He already felt as if he had not one, but several children now. His situation was funny.

‘I don't have time for this.’

His mirth didn't last long.

First, Hyrkan had to acquire the Skill. He once again raised his hand onto the Skill Book. It requested whether he would like to acquire the Skill. He chose to accept.

[You've acquired the Armament Skill.]

After he finished learning the skill, Hyrkan put the thoughts about the Armament Skill to the back of his head. He once again started to carefully search his surrounding.

‘Let’s clear the Dungeon first.’

The message indicating the Dungeon Clear hadn’t popped up. He hadn’t received the Bonus EXP that followed a Dungeon Clear. This meant he hadn’t found the element that was required for a Dungeon Clear. Hyrkan had to work on this problem instead of thinking about the Armament Skill.

‘There should be something here. There should be something that’ll inform me about the identity of this Dungeon...’

Hyrkan busily searched through the book cases. Afterwards, he started searching the desk drawers, when it happened.

Dulkung dulkung!

One desk drawer wouldn’t open. There weren’t any noticeable change to Hyrkan’s expression as he kicked the desk’s drawer with his foot.

Kwah-jeek!

Accompanying a rough sound, the desk drawer was demolished. When he looked inside the destroyed drawer, he found a bundle of documents being stored there. The owner of this Dungeon used

Salamanders as ingredients. He wrote down the results of his research in making the Elemental Knights.

The title on the cover was quite grandiose and weighty.

[Research Log about the Ancient Power]

It looked like a very important title. However, when Hyrkan caught sight of the title, he let out a single snort. The word 'Ancient Power' was something that was very familiar to him. It was like the name of the neighbor's dog. It was so familiar that he was almost sick and tired of it.

'It's the Ruined Kingdom's bait.'

Ancient Power.

This was a topic one comes across the main storyline of the Warlord. It wasn't anything complicated. It was a trope commonly used in most fantasy novels. Some ancient kingdom possessed a special power. They used the power in a wrong way, and it destroyed the brilliant and civilized kingdom.

After a long time passes, the power reappears once again in the world, and it drives the world into chaos! That was the basic story line.

Additionally, the power used by the current corrupt count, and Baeduk's prince was also of the Ancient Power. The Warlord users

were given frequent clues, so one could piece together this story. This was why these elements of the story was hidden in places like the Dungeons as bait.

‘When I heard the story for the first time, I was like wow, wow! I was like that.’

Unexpectedly, this subject was a bit of a money maker. The Top 30 guilds were interested in this main scenario quest, which was viewed through the outlook of a Warlord. There were at least one program that dealt with main quests like this. Since he found it here, it probably held a similar story! The fan of this piece would gather, and a minor program would have various conversation about the view of the world inside this work. Moreover, these types of shows were unexpectedly popular. Hundred thousand to millions of viewers enjoyed watching even this minor view of the world.

This manuscript wouldn’t bring in an enormous sum of money, but it would bring in enough. In the case of the Top 30 Guilds, they frequently purchased and collected such manuscripts.

Hyrkan put away the manuscript. He had planned on taking it any ways, but this manuscript felt much more precious now since he had to worry about the Armament Skill.

‘I need to earn every penny.’

At the same time, he started berating himself for hunting in luxury up until now .

‘Shit. Why did I do that?’

It happened at that moment.

[You’ve reached the Dungeon’s Secret.]

[You’ve cleared the Dungeon. You’ll be given a reward.]

[You have leveled up.]

With the notice, the not too short Dungeon Exploration came to an end for Hyrkan.

Plop plop.

Ahn-jaehyun dropped grape-flavored candies into his cheap coffee. Then he busily worked his hand over the Tablet PC. He was calculating figures using a Calculator App.

‘At the very least, he would have to give level 60 and up rare weapons to the 11 Skeletons. He could purchase those items using his excess funds of 20 thousand gold. Since he had the level 70 Set Items of Shadow Hunting Dog Set and the White Mamba’s Tooth Sword, he wouldn’t have to invest any more for his own equipment.

If he sold the Skull Snake Set and the items he earned from this

Dungeon Exploration, he'll be able to obtain 20 thousand gold. However, he would need around that much spare funds for his future hunting. Then there was the Orc Hero's Sword... He would feel the absence if he sold it. It would better to give it to a Skeleton.'

His calculation didn't end there. His calculation continued as he crossed from the game into reality.

'I'll have to purchase a higher model V Gear. There was a limit when one used the Level 1. It would be hard to immediately get the level 6, but he should at least purchase a level 3 or level 4. If he switched to a higher model while still paying his old installment, his monthly installment would be...'

Ahn-jaehyun's forehead was stacked with wrinkles as he continually calculated everything. When he finished his calculation, Ahn-jaehyun's expression became rigid with his foreheads still furrowed.

"Uheekoo."

Ahn-jaehyun, who had enough money to live in luxury, suddenly found himself in rags now.

'Suddenly, I'm short on money. Fuck.'

He swallowed his sigh. He withdrew his hand from the Tablet PC, and Ahn-jaehyun looked at his one room as he sipped his coffee.

The inside of his house was so poor that the large monitor and V Gear felt out of place. The corner of Ahn-jaehyun's mouth hung downwards.

‘I thought I was trending up towards the right direction...’

He had thought about moving to a new place when he had some money to spare. However, he would have to push that dream further down the line. As if his coffee was bitter, Ahn-jaehyun let out a bitter laugh.

‘My intent was to play the game to make a living. Currently, I'm putting my living expenses into the game.’

Truthfully, Ahn-jaehyun could make an agreement at any time. The moment he made an agreement he would be able to live a decent life. He just had to pick up one enthusiastic love call sent by the Top 30 Guilds. After 3 years, he would have a decent apartment, and a nice automobile. He would also have a pretty expensive watch on his wrist. He would go to meetings, and he will be able to introduce his job as a Warlord Gamer with pride.

He just had to come to an agreement. Then he wouldn't have to be hungry like right now, and he wouldn't have to take on any risk.

‘At any rate, my pride is quite expensive.’

However, he couldn't make that agreement. He knew the truth.

Ahn-jaehyun drank the bitter coffee, and he let out a bitter laugh.

However, the numerous grape-flavored candies soon took the edge off the bitterness. The sweetness coated the inside of his mouth.

‘Still, this is a favorable development for me.’

The appearance of the Armament Skill would most definitely damage Ahn-jaehyun’s expense plan. On the other hand, the appearance of the Armament skill would significantly increase Ahn-jaehyun’s potential.

He would get stronger by using weapons. This was most definitely a great thing. However, the weapons in the game didn’t only serve to increase one’s attack. It was the same for the Warlord. Numerous types of weapons were used by the Warlord.

Especially when he reached the Unique Rank and the ruined Kingdom arc, weapons containing the Ancient Power would start to appear. The Aura from the weapon could decrease the stat of the targets. On the opposite spectrum, there were weapons that could increase the Stat of the nearby allies. There were even defensive gear that was touted to have an absolute defense.

They were really really expensive weapons. If Hyrkan used all the money he had gathered up until now, he wouldn’t be able to buy those weapons. What if he could equip his troops with those weapons? The Skeleton army commanded by Ahn-jaehyun would induce unimaginable fear.

Moreover, it wouldn't end there.

‘At level 100, I'll acquire the Skeleton Knights....’

The moment any class reached level 100, one would learn one's main skills. It would dramatically strengthen his potential. Amongst his summoning skill, there was a skill called ‘Skeleton Knights’. The Skeleton Knights were twice as strong as the Skeleton Warriors, and their special ability increased the stat of the Skeleton Warriors.

Furthermore...

‘If I also acquire the Death Knights, afterwards.....’

After the Skeleton Knights, the creme de la creme of the Necromancer was the Death Knights. A Death Knight was powerful enough of an existence that it didn't need to be equipped. In the Rich Lich's Solo Raid video, Death Knights displayed superior battle capability than a fairly skilled ranker.

Moreover, if he activated the Death Knight's special ability called the Immortal Army, the Skeletons surrounding the Death Knight would receive an almost limitless life.

Boo-roo-roo!

For a brief moment, Ahn-jaehyun's body shook. Even in his own opinion, he would be able to possess a ridiculous amount of combat power.

If only he had money.

If he was overflowing with money, Ahn-jaehyun would truly become what he wanted to be. He'll be able to become a Warlord.

‘Yes. I have to quickly make money, so I can give my Skeletons good weapons to carry around. It isn't the time to be standing around like this.’

The thought forced Ahn-jaehyun into moving.

Ahn-jaehyun finished his coffee, then he put on his clothes. It was light clothes suited for the end of spring, when summer started to approach. His clothes showed off his skinny frame.

Ahn-jaehyun adjusted his glasses, then he stepped out of the house.

[Maung's Request]

– Quest Rank : Rare

– Quest Requirement Level : None

– Quest Summary : Investigate the monsters inside the Pareung Forest.

– Quest Reward : Maung's Trust

He manipulated the clock to confirm the content of the Quest. Then Hyrkan turned his head, and he stared at the mountain in front of him. Even viewing it from afar, the large forest gave off a sense of peril.

The full forest held a foreboding feeling.

Pareung Forest.

It was crawling with monsters over level 90. It was a region where a single village hadn't formed even now. Decent regular users wouldn't even dare to approach this region. The fairly high level users would come with a party formed by the guild. It was a place where they would be inserted for a full-scale fighting.

From the corner of the Pareung Forest, the sound of explosions rang out, and fire rose into the air. Sometimes he would hear a chilling and powerful cry of a monster.

Hyrkan, who was viewing this sight, quickly put on the Hahoe mask slung on the waist of his armor. His new armor gave off a sense of sleekness and sophistication. He also wore a hooded shirt inside his armor, and he put on the hood. When he put on his hood, darkness descended to cover Hyrkan's face.

Then he was with the Darkness.

[Shadow Hunting Dog Set's Special Option 'Shadow Hunting Doge' was activated.]

[Shadow Hunting Doge Set's Special Effect increased movement speed.]

[Shadow Hunting Doge Set's Special Effect dims the presence of the wearer.]

[Shadow Hunting Doge Set's Special Effect decreases defense by 20%.]

The new power wrapped itself around Hyrkan. As Hyrkan felt the power of his new Defensive Set surround him, he softly spat out his resolve.

“I'll kill all the bastards, who will interfere with me making my money.”

His account held \$232,120, It was a resolve made by someone who had to make a monthly payment of couple thousand a month for the V Gear.

Chapter 68. Helm Ogre (1)

[Your Level has risen.]

A pleasant sound was heard.

‘It won’t give me any time to rest.’

However, the moment Hyrkan heard the announcement for his level up, he frowned instead of having a happy smile on his face. He threw his body towards the battlefield in front of his eyes.

Hyrkan ran towards a battlefield that held two 3 meter giants with black and ragged skin. They had rock-like skins. Seven Skeleton Warriors, and a golem was nearby.

Level 90 monster. Black Troll.

Their tough skin meant they had high defense, and they also possessed an astonishing regeneration ability. They also gave a very substantial amount of EXP. This monster had ruthlessly swung its club at Hyrkan a moment ago.

He was sent flying after a critical hit. After Hyrkan healed his wound, he was about to eat a consumable item when he leveled up as one of the Black Troll died.

The level up bonus recovered him fully. Since his Stamina and

Magic was filled to the brim, Hyrkan got a little bit of a breathing room.

‘This is so tiring.’

He swallowed his complaints. The Black Troll ran towards him, and its club came down like lightning. He sidestepped the blow, then he slid between the Black Troll’s legs to escape.

Then he quickly came to a stop.

After a quickly leap, he stabbed the White Mamba Fang Sword into the Black Troll’s back.

Poo-oohk!

White Mamba Fang Sword. It was a level 70 Unique Rank Item. The main attribute of items were assigned randomly. Instead of Strength and Stamina, it rolled Wisdom and Magic. Hyrkan had purchased it at a cheap price at auction. Even at a very conservative price, he had purchased it for 38,000 gold.

For the general public, it was a ridiculous price, but Hyrkan felt as if the price had been a bargain.

[The Black Troll was poisoned by the White Mamba’s Venom.]

White Mamba Fang Sword’s secondary attribute, Poisoning!

The damage caused by the Poisoning was quite strong. Moreover, the Poisoning Magic worked very well against Trolls, who had a powerful skin regenerative property. Even if its regeneration was strong, there was still a finite HP. Its HP didn't recover. It only recovered its wounds. The effect of the poison continued as it disregarded the regeneration ability.

Moreover, the sword's damage was also powerful. This fact was evident when the sword pierced through the very thick leather of the Black Troll in a single breath.

When the sword was embedded deep, the Black Troll's regeneration ability activated. Its skin started to regenerate around the still embedded sword. Hyrkan had a bloody smile on his face. With both his hands holding the sword, he pressed both his feet against the Troll's back. He looked akin to a climber using rock climbing techniques.

He was skillful and sure in his techniques.

There was a reason why Warlord users took the Climbing Test. In Warlord, the Rock Climbing technique was an absolute requisite skill. It was used, while fighting against any monsters over midsize. If one was capable of sticking to the monster's body, it gave one the opportunity to give constant damage to the monster.

Choo-roong!

In this position, Hyrkan unsheathed his other sword from his

waist, then he tirelessly moved the blade to make countless cuts on the Black Troll's back.

Sss-ooht, sss-ooht!

Every time he made a mark with his sword, he saw the wound heal immediately. It was a chilling sight. However, the damage was most definitely accumulating, and the Black Troll's HP was quickly and abruptly decreasing.

Ooh-uhuh!

Finally, the Black Troll turned his attention toward Hyrkan. The aggro was steered towards Hyrkan. The Black Troll started struggling to catch Hyrkan, who was stuck to the Black Troll's back.

The Black Troll didn't perceive the Skeleton Warriors in the front holding terrifying weapons.

It was a mistake.

What's worse, the Skeleton Warrior that had been facing the Black Troll earlier was the Black Orc Skeleton Warrior with the Orc Hero's Sword in his grasp. The sword had the power to ignore the target's defense...

Suh-guhk, suh-guhk!

In a flash, he dealt significant damage to both its knees. It wasn't a wound the Black Troll could ignore. Moreover, that wasn't the end of it.

Ddul-goo-ruk, ddul-goo-ruk!

The Skeleton Warriors didn't let this opportunity pass. They ran towards the Black Troll, while making bone rattles. There was a horn attached to their skulls. It was the Madness Helm, and it made them much more fearsome. Moreover, through Hyrkan's repeated teachings and continuous battles, the combat AI of the Skeleton Soldiers had already reached a professional level.

When the Skeleton Warriors saw a crack, they charged forward like eels swimming towards a crack.

After they ran in....

Pook, shweek, kook!

All kinds of sounds that could be made by swords hitting flesh was made.

Ooh-uhuh!

The Black Troll's yell spread out wide into the surrounding. During all of this, Hyrkan tirelessly moved his sword. As if Hyrkan

was trying to pull a sword out of the ground, he put both feet on the Black Troll's back, and he pulled out the White Mamba Fang Sword.

Pooh-haht!

He extracted his sword, and an arc of blood fountained into the air. Hyrkan dismounted to the floor. Hyrkan rolled once as he dropped, and he came to his feet unharmed.

Ooh-oh?

The being that had been frustrating the Black Troll by skillfully attacking its back had fallen to the floor. The Black Troll turned his head towards Hyrkan.

It meant he turned his back on the Skeleton Warriors, who had been tormenting the Black Troll!

Sheek!

Hyrkan had a deep smile underneath the Hahoe Mask.

[Hyrkan]

– Level : 75

– Occupation : Magician

– Title : 39

– Stat : Strength(649)/Stamina(219)/Intelligence(352)/Magic(467)

‘The Hunting Dog Set’s Options are fantastic.’

After he distributed the Stat Points earned from the level up, Hyrkan checked his Stat Window then he put on a slight smile. He had bought this set under the market value in preparation for reaching level 70. He was satisfied with the Shadow Dog Set’s Options. No, it exceeded his expectation. Now that he was well-off in terms of Stats, it also enriched Hyrkan’s heart.

Of course.

‘Still, why are there so many Shadow Dog sets being released? Today I saw at least 10 full sets come on the auction. Will the price drop in the future?’

He had spent a lot of money to purchase the Shadow Dog Set. He paid 37,000 gold to purchase it, so this was a fresh worry for Hyrkan. Since he had invested his entire net worth into commodities, he felt like a stock broker looking at one’s stock daily. He understood how they felt.

This situation was basically asking for trouble. Hyrkan looked at himself as he shook his head from side to side.

‘Let’s only think about the good things. Good thoughts.’

Hyrkan forced himself to think positive thoughts.

‘Well, my level up is progressing very well.’

The most positive news was his level up pace. Currently, Hyrkan’s level up pace was unrivaled. His goal was to raise 10 levels in a month. At this pace, he’ll be close to becoming the top ranker within a year. Moreover, he have gained 5 levels from the Parung Forest in only 13 days. It was a very surprising level up pace.

‘I’m most definitely closing the distance with the rankers.’

Currently, the highest level on Warlord was 134. Of course, Perfect One Sulwoo was the one to achieve the top level. The top 100 Ranker was 125. Hyrkan was only level 75, so those levels looked very far away. However, Hyrkan was slowly and gradually narrowing the difference.

It was a very positive sign.

‘.....this was the result of too many monsters being here. It’s problematic.’

Moreover, the situation wasn’t something normal.

Parung Forest.

It was teeming with Black Trolls over level 90. It also had field boss monsters like the fearsome Red Eye Ogre. This was the hunting ground where the so-called Red Eye appeared. It wouldn't have been a problem if this was the only thing he had to be worried about.

The problem was there was a very small amount of users permanently stationed at the Parung Forest. Moreover, not many users hunted here. Currently, the Parung Forest didn't even have a village nearby. Not many users used this place as their stage.

The reason behind it was complex. If one wanted to make a village here, one would need a powerful guild to make the village at Parung Forest. The Parung forest wasn't a bad hunting ground, but a lot of effort would have to be put into making the village. Effort wasn't the only problem. In the end, there wasn't a suitable location where a village could be built.

The EXP was quite nice here, but the difficulty of this location could give trouble to even the level 90 users.

Most of the current Warlord users were between latter half of lvl70 or early lvl80s. From their perspective, the Bulcass mountain was much better option than the Parung Forest.

There was no need to suffer by coming to the Parung Forest.

This was the reason why the Parung Forest was overflowing with monsters.

Unless there was a large influx of users to the Parung Forest, the number of monsters would continue to increase, and at a certain point, it would be too difficult to hunt here.

Of course, the practical users retreated at that point. There was no need to risk their lives to stay here.

However, Hyrkan had a task he must pass in the Parung Forest.

‘I’ve searched the Parung Forest for nearly a fortnight, yet I haven’t found any clues.’

Maeung’s Request.

He had to find monsters akin to the Bear Warrior. He needed to find a monster wearing equipment like a person.

However, to his knowledge, there weren’t any monster wearing armor within the Parung Forest. The Black Trolls and the Red Eye Ogres didn’t equip themselves with items.

‘Maybe this is like the instance of the Dragon Lizard. I might have come across a Quest Monster with a very low probability of...’

If the Parung Forest kept producing a higher number of monsters than expected, Hyrkan had no choice but to retreat. It would be better than dying. However, this meant his quest completion would be pushed to a later date.

Hyrkan bit hard at his lips.

‘The Stormhunters are probably about to graduate from the Bulcass mountains.’

If Hyrkan’s quest was delayed here, the Stormhunter’s Quest line would converge with his.

This meant he will be in direct competition with the Stormhunter’s guild. Would it be possible for Hyrkan to win against them?

The probability wasn’t that high.

Also, he didn’t care if some other guild overtook him, but Hyrkan’s pride wouldn’t allow him to fall behind the Stormhunter guild.

Hyrkan stood up.

‘Should I have entered into a community at that time?’

At that moment, Hyrkan thought about what happened 10 days

earlier.

There were only about 10 user groups operating in the Parung Forest. It was a very low number. If one considered the size of the Parung forest, it could support over 50 teams hunting at this location.

These 10 groups were composed of outstanding players. The average level of the party members was level 95. Basically, they were at the cusp of being promoted.

The users, who were at the cusp of being promoted, usually overworked themselves to quickly reach level 100.

It didn't matter if it was strenuous, hard and not profitable. They looked for a hunting ground where they could level up in the shortest amount of time possible.

This was also true for the Alto Family.

They were a group of 5 people, and all of them were level 98. They only needed 2 levels before they all reached level 100. They had come to the Parung forest, since they didn't have to worry about running out of monsters here. It didn't matter to them that this place was a much more difficult place to hunt.

It was great at first. The place was overflowing with monsters, and the Black Troll's EXP was quite substantial.

However, the Alto Family was starting to feel their limit recently.

“Now we have to fight at least three of them at every encounter.”

“If we only meet Black Trolls, we’ll be fortunate. Recently, aren’t all the Black Trolls being accompanied by smallfrys?”

The number of monsters weren’t decreasing. Instead, it was actually increasing. It was how the Warlord’s Regen System was set-up. The Warlord Regen System took into consideration of additional users showing up at a map. This was why the system regenerated a higher number of monsters in the field compared to the users.

However, no new users had come to this map recently. Eventually, the number of monsters in the Parung forest expanded, and it was up to the users to hunt them down.

“What’s the status of our consumables?”

“We might have to go visit the castle once. Or we might have to call in the traveling merchant. I don’t think we’ll be able to hold out until level 100.”

The biggest problem was the party had used more consumable items than planned as they tried to survive the overtaxing battles.

“We were so meticulous in our preparations....”

“Didn’t you say in the beginning we wouldn’t be able to use it all even if we tried?”

“It’s a money drain. Will we be taking a loss, because we came here?”

“It’ll be hard for us to make any profit. If we are lucky, we might break even.”

The Alto family let out a sigh. It wasn’t too hard to go back and restock their items. However, the goal of reaching level 100 would be delayed by a day or two. This made that option unpalatable. They were like 3 day starved dogs with food in their near future. Endure! That’s what they told themselves. Still, they were reaching an end to their patience.

It also meant they couldn’t overstretch themselves. It was preferable to waste one or two day in-game instead of wasting 48 hours from the Game Over. They were players who had bought a 20 thousand dollar system and they were paying couple hundred dollars per month on the game. They knew which scenario was more profitable.

Still, they couldn’t help, but be filled with regret.

“We should have just given the money to the Hahoe Mask, and we should have asked if he could carry us on his bus.”

Their regret centered around the Hahoe Mask Hyrkan.

“He is soloing in this place. I still can’t believe it.”

“I saw it with my own eyes, but I still can’t believe it.”

Since the Parung forest was a stage with a small number of groups, everyone knew who was operating there.

They had also developed their own community, and they helped each other when the need arose. Since no village was nearby, this arrangement increased their survivability. The community also allowed them to make personal connections, and it might benefit them in the future. At the very least, they were sharing the same hunting ground, so they were of similar levels.

This was why the Alto family had invited Hahoe Mask Hyrkan to the community, but they were coldly turned down. At the time, everyone thought, ‘What kind of person is that?’, but now they were in awe of the Hahoe Mask’s skill.

The fact that the Alto family had to leave before they could reach level 100 made them feel a sense of loss.

“He’s an amazing bastard.”

“It is rumored that the Hahoe Mask summons Skeleton Warriors, and one of them wields the Orc Hero’s Sword.”

“The Orc Hero’s Sword?”

“He gave a Skeleton such an expensive item? Is he some kind of heir to a rich family?”

“Ah, I’m jealous. If only I could pay2win like the Hahoe Mask, my level would be....”

“Hahoe Mask. I bet he eat steak and wine everyday. I bet he imports only the highest quality of coffees.”

“Stop it. I bet he is too tired of meat, so he eat caviar with a spoon like ice cream.”

The sense of loss they felt made them think about all kinds of things. It happened at that moment.

“Huh?”

One of the user, who was listening to this rubbish conversation, suddenly stood up in place as if he had heard something.

“The Toon Party has sent a request for a rescue.”

“The Toon party?”

Toon Party.

Like the Alto family, the Toon party were composed of members close to advancing into level 100. It was a 5 man party that the Alto family had gotten acquainted with around a fortnight ago.

“It seems we are the closest to them. What should we do?”

“We aren’t complete strangers with the Toon party. They helped us out before. We have to leave anyways, so let’s help them then leave. Also, isn’t the Toon party more powerful than us? Shouldn’t they have no problem in taking care of couple Black Trolls?”

“Did they find the Red Eye?”

At the question, the man used voice talk to have a brief conversation, then he answered his party member’s question.

“It’s an ogre, but they are saying it is an ogre wearing a helmet?”

“What?”

Chapter 69. Helm Ogre (2)

“If you change your mind, this is our voice talk search word, and password. Please join us. Let’s help each other out.”

He thought about the words spoken by the Alto Family’s leader. He recalled the address given to him by the user named Neal. Hyrkan’s memory wasn’t that great, but it wasn’t too hard remember the address. The search word was Parung Forest, and the password was 991. If he couldn’t remember that, there was something severely wrong with him.

Moreover, he recalled how he looked as he turned down their offer.

Hyrkan lowered his head.

‘I guess I was a bit cold at that time.’

He had coldly refused their offer, and he recalled how unpleasant he had looked.

Moreover, he now desired their help, so Hyrkan could only let out a sigh.

‘Will I be able to join the community now?’

Of course, Hyrkan knew the characteristics of a community, and

what role it serves. A community was a lubricant-like existence for Warlord. The communities were unexpectedly of great help in numerous situations. They were sometimes more helpful than a guild. The guild took a long time to give help, but the community could give immediate help, since it was composed of users in the same region.

It wasn't uncommon to see a community evolve into a guild. Sometimes, the community was on equal footing with the guilds.

This was the reason why he turned down the offer to join the community.

The members of a community had a deep and hard to break bonds. Once he dipped his foot in, it would be inevitable he would leave behind his footprint. What would happen if they became close? It was fine to become close to them. Hyrkan was afraid of what would happen after they became close.

“Ughhh.”

Hyrkan let out a moan.

Kwahng!

Hyrkan's worries disappeared suddenly with the sound of an explosive boom.

Hweeek!

Hyrkan turned his head towards where the noise emanated. It had detonated from a pretty far distance away yet the sound of the explosion was quite powerful. Hyrkan, who was far away, heard it with his ear, but he could also feel the explosion with his body.

“Oh!”

Hyrkan reflexively let out a short exclamation.

If such an explosion happened in reality, it would cause widespread fear. However, the sound of an explosion occurring in Warlord was like a beacon indicating there was something worth watching for the spectators.

“The power used is quite considerable?”

In truth, the powerful magic used by high level magicians were quite the spectacle. This was the reason why there was a program showing only high level magicians of the 30 Great Guilds using magic. It only showed them using magic, but the number of people tuning in was quite considerable.

However, the magicians didn't like to use magic of this caliber.

‘So why are they using such magic here?’

They especially almost never used it against regular monsters on

a Field type hunting ground unless it was a Boss monster.

Basically, the magician's Magic Stat was on the low side. When one levels up, most of the bonus points was invested into Intelligence. If one had a lot of disposable income, one could use Recovery Items to cover up the short supply of magic power. In that case, the user would invest all the bonus points into Intelligence.

It was obvious to say this, but the powerful magical spells required incredible amount of Magical Powers. It wasn't something one could use easily. The worst situation a magician can be in was when one was short on Magic Powers. One would be literally sucking on one's thumb for the duration.

Also, the really powerful magic could change the tide of the battle. This was why there were some positives and negatives. The magic couldn't differentiate between allies and enemies. Even if one was in a party, the swung sword or the magic thrown by an ally could cause others damage. This was how the game, Warlord, worked.

So what happens if one's allies get swept up in the area of effect of the powerful magic? It wasn't something one could forgive by buying the other party member a dinner.

However, that kind of powerful magic had made an appearance right now.

‘Mmmm.....’

Hyrkan didn't dismiss this fact.

‘It happened when I first came here, and then.....’

Usually, normal user would dismiss such an event. A really strong magic had gone off! The user wouldn't think any further than that.

However, Hyrkan was different. He was pitiable and worthless in the real world, but inside Warlord, Hyrkan had more knowledge and experience than anyone. His instincts were more outstanding than a wild beast.

It was like that right now.

Hyrkan's mind instinctively organized the situation.

‘Four days ago.’

Hyrkan had witnessed an enormous explosion when he first came to the Parung Forest. The explosion that occurred at the time was also the result of powerful magic. When he looked into it, a party fighting the Boss monster Red Eye used the magic to buy some time.

The Red Eye was killed on that day.

This had been 4 days ago. Now the loud sound of an explosion had rang out once again. It may be that the Red Eye was newly regenerated, and some group was trying to take it down.

However, there was an important fact he knew. The Red Eye Ogre took one week to regenerate. If the Red Eye was killed 4 days ago, then why was there a such a deafening roar?

‘There should be no Red Eyes here.’

He was sure of that fact. The Red Eye wasn’t currently present in the battlefield nor any other place inside the Parung Forest. This current situation was a prime example why Hyrkan was thinking about joining a Community. Once the Red Eye regenerates, it would be much harder for him to hunt and search inside the Parung Forest. He had to get his answer before that happened.

So why did someone use such powerful magic?

Of course, someone could have used it to blow away a large number of monsters with a single blow.

‘No. There aren’t any users here, who would hunt by kiting. There aren’t any irrational users here, who would try hunting a group of monsters.’

Hyrkan recalled the parties and guilds he saw in this place, and he hadn’t seen anyone who would have tried kiting the monsters. This place wasn’t ideal to try such a group hunting method. This

place was overflowing with monster yet someone wanted to kite the monsters? One would fail at least once or twice in ten tries. Moreover, that one or two failure will lead to a Game Over.

‘Then it means something strong has appeared?’

This was the conclusion he came up with.

Hyrkan put on his Shadow Dog Set’s hood.

[Shadow Hunting Dog Set’s Special Effect ‘Shadow Hunting Dog’ is activated.]

His presence became faint, and his body became light.

Hyrkan started moving swiftly like a Shadow Hunting Dog.

When the Toon party sent out a request for help, the first one to arrived was the Alto family, who had been the closest to them.

However, when the Alto family saw the Toon Family surrounded by a group of monsters, they didn’t immediately rush in to help them. Instead, they hid between the black trees as they assessed the situation.

They had a gut feeling as they viewed the sight.

‘Ooh-ah. Isn’t this going to be really hard?’

‘If we join in, won’t we be killed?’

‘What the hell? What are those bastards?’

The situation was much worse than expected.

At a glance, they saw at least 8 Black Trolls. Moreover, small fry monsters were surrounding the Black Trolls. There were over 20 of them, and they weren’t monsters that could be ignored.

“Hey. Why are they suddenly wearing armor?”

“Maybe they formed an alliance with the monster in the Bulkas mountains.”

“Do you think this is an appropriate time for a joke?”

“I’m sorry.....”

Moreover, the monsters were armed. The gears were quite good.... It looked better than the gears worn by some users. Their gears were clean, and shiny. It didn’t show any signs of battle. Also, the Black Trolls didn’t have their customary thick wooden clubs for weapon. Instead, they possessed blunt steel swords.

There was more. There was a being that drew their gaze more than the group of Black Trolls.

“That’s the one.”

“It’s an ogre wearing a helmet.”

It was 5 meters tall. Normally, an ogre would explicitly show off its muscles, but this one wore a silver armor. Its most memorable feature was the eyes that could be seen beneath the horned helmet. Its eye was a mixture of red and black.

There were 30 of them in total.

The 5 members of the Toon party was surrounded by these group of 30 monsters. The Mage and the Priest was within the Shield Magic. The tanker had received a full Buff, and he was trying to block the advancing monsters in front of his party members with his last-ditch effort.

This formation wouldn’t last long.

If they were going to help, they would have to help them immediately.

However, they had never seen these types of monsters before. Moreover, there were 30 of them. The Alto Family merely had 5 members, so they probably would be able to do nothing even if they did step forward.

Even during all of this, the Alto Family closely observed the situation. They were trying hard to gather as much information as they could.

Eventually, someone made an observation.

“The ogre’s eyes isn’t red. I think it is a mixture of red and black?”

“Black?”

“Was it exposed to the power of Corruption?”

“I thought the Corrupt Count was killed?”

“Even if the Corrupt Count is dead, it doesn’t mean the power of Corruption would disappear. At a glance, I can tell it is a Quest Monster that appears in the Main Scenario.”

Even during all of this, they were able to recognize the clue. The Alto Family were most definitely worthy of reaching level 100. Of course, if they stepped forward to help the Toon Party, they would reach level 100 at a later date.

“If we could open up a path.....”

“Let’s say we succeed in opening a path. If their aggro is drawn towards us, who would take on the aggro of that many monsters?”

“Of course, the tanker should head out..”

“.....seriously. Next time I start a new game I will unconditionally become a magician.”

The Toon Party was trapped within the group of monsters. If the Alto Family wanted to save them, they would have to risk a Game Over. First, they had to open up a pathway, but the aggro would land on the Alto Family. Afterwards, they had no idea how the situation would turn out.

The important part was the gravity of word, Game Over.

It wasn't light at all.

Moreover, they were at the cusp of level 100. The 48 hours would feel like 48 days to them.

The Alto Family looked at each other.

‘Ah. I really don't want to die.....’

‘Should we just ignore them and head back?’

‘Still, it isn't as if we are acquainted with the Toon party for only one or two days. When we said we ran out of items, they even shared their healing items with us.’

‘They are good guys.....’

They didn’t want to step forward.

However, they also didn’t want to run away.

As they were thinking hard about the situation, the priest who had been in voice talk with the Toon Party spoke.

“The members of the Toon Party saw us.”

They were seen?

Everyone’s face hardened. Now they couldn’t just run away as if they hadn’t seen anything.

“What did they say?”

“They said they won’t be able to escape from this place easily. They said to run. They don’t want us to die in vain. They don’t want us to suffer a Game Over.”

The moment they heard those words, the Alto Family easily came to a decision.

“That son of a bitch. He really knows how to butter up a person.”

“It would be bad form to run away after hearing those words..”

“Let’s not over do it. We’ll used some magic to open a path for them. We’ll help them only up to that point.

The Alto Family were gamers, who knew romanticism.

The situation was already a pandemonium when Hyrkan arrived. Ten users were in a confrontation against a group of monsters. Hyrkan noticed the 10 users were divided into three groups, and each group was fighting independently of each other.

This wasn’t a normal formation.

This was...

‘They were attempting a rescue, but instead they were swept up into the fight.’

Basically, they hadn’t intended to join the fight, but the result of the battle had turned out unpredictably.

‘While they were trying open a path with magic, a portion of the party became cut off by the monsters. Moreover, the ones that went into help the other group became surrounded...’

Hyrkan quickly assessed the situation. Truthfully, he didn’t need

to assess the situation. That wasn't the important part. The important part was coming to a decision on what he would do.

Hyrkan kept a low profile as he watched the scene. Thanks to the effects of the Shadow Hunting Dog set Hyrkan's sense of presence was very faint.

This was why...

'If I just stay still like this.....'

Hyrkan's thoughts were very devious. He imagined staying in place and doing nothing.

It was bad manners, but it wasn't illegal or against the rules to pick up their loot. It was up to the individual if one wanted to take the dead's possession. Moreover, there were going to be 10 users on the cusp of level 100 dead in the near future. The items dropped would be no worse than level 80. If a rare item came out, he would easily be able to sell it for over 1000 gold for each one of them. He had the chance to pick up money that was equivalent to a one month salary of the department head at a large company. Would anyone turn such an opportunity down?

If these users had caused even a little bit of hardship for Hyrkan, he would have waited for their death in comfort, while listening to music.

'That doesn't sit right with me.'

However, the current situation was a bit different.

First of all, the users over there had never harmed Hyrkan.

‘I’m sure.’

The group of monsters facing them was definitely the group pointed out by the Maeung.

‘These were the troops of Corrupt Monsters that the Immoral Prince had wanted to create.’

Hyrkan was pretty familiar with these troops.

Warlord users had fought a historically large scaled battle with the Corrupt Army controlled by the Immoral prince. Hyrkan didn’t play a main role in this battle, but he had fought with the Hahoe Mask Guild. He had fought against numerous smallfrys like them.

Hyrkan agonized over what he should do.

‘I have to catch that one.’

The thing he was sure about was the fact that the ogre with the helm had made an appearance. If he didn’t catch it now, there would be no next time. When those users fall today, the news

about the Helm Ogre would spread.

Even the users here probably new about the Main Scenario Quest in progress, and they probably knew about the special characteristic. The moment they catch sight of the Helm Ogre's eyes, they will recall the story about the Corrupter's Power. They will immediately realize that this was a clue for the new Main Scenario Quest.

If this truth was spread, the 30 Great Guilds would move.

If he wanted to act, this would be his only chance. Moreover, the ten users over there in danger weren't weak. They were all users at the cusp of becoming level 100. They were plenty strong, and their desire to stay alive was stronger than anyone else right now. If they could live, they would probably be willing to accept anything.

In the end, these were people, who knew manners, and they had a sense of romanticism.

‘If I join the fight... I’ll be able to capture it.’

Hyrkan took off his hood. The darkness disappeared, and his face with the Hahoe Mask equipped was revealed. The power of the Shadow Hunting dog receded. His feet became heavier, and his presence strengthened.

‘Still, they are users, who possess romanticism. Anyone could tell this would be a very hard task, yet they are helping their

Community.'

Hyrkan smiled beneath his Hahoe Mask.

'They are users with such upright characters. I'm sure they won't greet me with empty arms when I save them from the brink of death?'

Chapter 70. Helm Ogre (3)

7.

Kah-ahng, kah-ahng, kwahng!

‘Aigo.’

Two companions were standing back to back. Tanker Neal had a large shield big enough to cover his body. He heard the sound of steel pounding on his shield. It sounded like a countdown for his death.

‘I can't even bring myself to cuss now.’

The plan had been simple. They had planned on sending a powerful magic spell to blow away the monsters surrounding the Toon Party. The Toon party would then use that opportunity to escape. If the situation was unfavorable, they had planned on just retreating. It was a very simple job.

So they used the magic. It was a level 90 Rare Flame Type magic. The Bulldozer Bear was used. A 5 meter burning bear crazily ran directly towards the monsters. The Bulldozer Bear was the most suitable magic to break the perimeter.

It was quite effective. The Black Trolls wearing armor and the regular Black Troll were pushed back, and they were knocked

down to the floor by the Bulldozer Bear. The problem was the trail of fire left by the charging Bulldozer Bear. The Helm Ogre stepped on the burning field.

‘Can't this bastard see? Why the hell did he step on that?’

They intentionally tried hard not to draw the Helm Ogre's aggro, and they never expected the Helm Ogre to step on the fire.

After stepping on the fire made from magic, the Helm Ogre took damage, and the aggro instantly landed on the mage. While letting out a roar, the Helm Ogre charged towards the mage and it was very fast.

It was very quick and agile. The massive body moved so fast that its movement almost looked like a mirage. As it closed the distance, the Helm Ogre raised its blade high. It was positioning itself to cut down the enemy in a swift manner.

Since the mage had low Strength, he would be caught even if he ran away. This meant Tanker Neal had to get in between to block the attack. Neal had said that he would run away, but this was his family he had worked together to almost reach level one hundred. He couldn't just run away after leaving his family behind. The priest stuck to Neal's back. The two of them were left behind, so it was out of the question for the other three to run away.

Eventually, the Alto Family was also surrounded.

The Toon family tried to escape through the gap made by the Altop Family, but in the end, the Toon family was divided into two groups before they were surrounded again. Fortunately, the Toon Party had two Tankers. The two group was separated with the each Tanker anchoring the group. If the Tankers weren't present, one group would have been wiped out.

This was what had happened up until now.

‘Anyways, these monsters work very well together.’

Even in such a situation, Neal was analyzing the situation. It was the role of a Tanker. In a battle, the Tanker moved the closest around the enemies. If the Tanker couldn't block the attack, the priest and the mage would die. If the mage and the priest died, the tanker would die. If one of them had to die, it was more ideal for the tanker to die.

In Neal's opinion, the 30 armed monsters here were being commanded. They were too in sync.

This was especially apparent when the monsters formed the encircling net. They worked in close cooperation. This was the reason why the party had been instantly surrounded by the group of monsters.

On the other hand, this was also their weakness.

‘The order to form an encircling net must have the highest

priority.'

The monsters here had to form the encircling net first, then they could battle.

This resulted in not many monsters actually participating in battle to directly attack the Users. The rest of the group tried to keep the perimeter instead of joining in on the attack.

It meant the monsters were designed for this purpose. Neal and the other party members realized this, so they only defended the attacks from the attacking monsters. They didn't use their magic on the perimeter to draw the aggro to them.

‘We are quite fortunate that this is only a game.’

This result was possible only because this was a game.

In reality, if the enemy had enough numbers to form a perimeter, the commander would order a systematic attack.

However, the difficulty of the game would become too high if that had happened inside a game.

This was why they had to bide their time for an opportunity.

If a new party showed up, the group of monsters would move to surround that party too.

The problem was that the other parties were still far away. It would be difficult to pin their hopes on them.

‘If someone would just show up here...’

Eventually, Neal had a preposterous idea that was akin to a prayer.

At that moment...

Kwahng!

Someone really did just show up.

A sound of an explosion was heard from behind Neal's back. Instead of being surprised, Neal knew this was a chance that will never come again.

After the explosion went off, the perimeter started to pitch and roll. The monsters were moving to surround the new group. The dense perimeter became a little bit less dense.

Neal knew well what he had to do.

“Lump together!”

Instead of using this opportunity to run away, they had to gather together. If they scattered now, they would eventually be tracked down. They would be defeated one by one.

If they did the opposite by gathering, their number would be 10 users! They would be able to form a battle line with 3 Tankers.

Moreover, if the people helping them numbered over five, they wouldn't be at a numerical disadvantage. They'll be able to conduct a battle.

They'll live if they lumped together.

“Lump together! Lump together!”

The other two groups also thought along the same line as Neal. They had played Warlord for over a year, and these users were considered above average. They had dove into Warlord by the lure of being able to make ends meet through playing a game. No one here would back off like a coward.

They immediately gathered around each other.

When the mage and the priest joined the group, the Tankers were hit by the swung swords of the Orc and Trolls. However, there was no Game Over. They got into a triangular formation with the Tankers at each point, then the mages and priest were gathered in the middle.

The healing started.

"Wow. Nice to see you."

"It's really nice to see you. I never thought I would be this happy to see you."

"I told you to go yet you came. Why go through all this hardship?"

"I'm not doing this for free. I'll be sure to get a fair recompense."

"H...heal me."

"Anyway, who showed up right now?"

The conversations started up. It had only been a brief moment, but the party was swept up by various emotions. The party was raucous, and the group didn't show any signs of calming down. Even the Tankers, who were busy blocking the continuous sword strikes from the Black Trolls and the Black Orcs, tried to get at least a word into the chat as they all repeated the same questions. What explanation was there to be given?

At that moment, someone spoke.

"It's the Hahoe Mask!"

Those words consolidated the atmosphere, feelings and words that had been devolving into a mess.

8.

Each of them were worth 50 gold. The Bone Explosives had pretty good power, yet ten was enough to shake the battle field.

As the battle field shook, the Black Troll identified the new enemy. The armored group of monsters turned to look at the enemy. They looked towards Hyrkan's direction. There were 11 Skeleton Warriors and a 5 meter tall Golem lined up behind Hyrkan.

Each of the Skeleton Warriors looked different from each other. There were 7 Skeleton Warriors with the Madness Helm on. There were 4 Skeleton Warriors with the Bone Armor. They all couldn't have the same equipment, because of the Skill Rank and Hyrkan's available Magic Power. However, they all had one thing in common.

Hyrkan was their master and teacher.

Ddahk ddahk!

Hyrkan flicked his finger, and the Skeleton warriors charged straight towards the monsters.

Those with the Madness Helm was the fastest.

The Skeleton Warriors were fearless. They didn't care if the enemy was strong or if their swords would work against them. They just didn't care. The Skeleton Warriors nimbly evaded the swords flying towards them. Then, they continued their charge forward after cutting the body of its opponent.

Chooong!

The swords, and armors continuously clashed against each other.

Kahhng!

The sound of steel ringing permeated the surrounding.

It wasn't a sound that could have come from a symphony. Hyrkan ran in the midst of these noises. He cut through the group of monsters, and as he was running, he stepped on the body of a Troll. He jumped high into the sky, then he landed on the ground.

It was where the 3 Tankers had created an open space.

Hyrkan landed without any shakiness and opened his mouth.

“You have to make it worth my time. Help me catch the Helm Ogre.”

Straightforwardness.

It wasn't a request. It was almost an order. Those words flustered the party members. However, they weren't flustered for long.

“What do you need us to do?”

Hyrkan's words were right. Hyrkan had saved them, so at the very least, they had to make it worth his time.

The only thing left was whether they could trust Hyrkan's skill. Fortunately, that part wasn't a problem. Everyone here had seen it.

“It's a 1on1 stage.”

They saw the video of Hyrkan catching the Bear Warrior by himself. Anyone who liked the game Warlord had seen it. If a person still suspected Hyrkan's skills after that, one wasn't suspecting his skill. The person had an inferiority complex.

“Is it possible for him to deal damage?”

Of course, the Helm Ogre was several time stronger than the Bear Warrior. The Helm Ogre was probably very close to level 100. At the very least, there was a high probability that the Helm Ogre had the highest level here.

Moreover, as a Necromancer, there weren't that many methods

Hyrkan could use to deal damage. If he was a swordsman, who was a Striker instead of a Tanker, he could use skills to optimize his attack power to the extreme end. It was possible for the Striker to deal damage on par with a mage. However, it was hard to expect this from a Necromancer.

Even if they could create a 1on1 stage, Hyrkan wouldn't be able to deal damage easily.

“I'll destroy his armor first. Then I'll deal the damage.”

Hyrkan was well aware of this truth.

He hadn't wanted a one-on-one fight in the first place. He planned on destroying the armor being used by the Helm Ogre. If he was able to break the Armor, there were numerous ways to deal damage to the Ogre. No, since he had already decided to use the 10 users here, he didn't have to worry about dealing damage.

Currently, it wasn't important to see, who could deal the most damage. Depending on the Helm Ogre's HP status, it used various special abilities as it went through various phases. No one here knew that truth. Like the fight against the Bear Warrior, the right answer was to destroy the armor before the Helm Ogre could enter a new phase.

This was the basic plan used when fighting against an unknown monster.

These users were at the cusp of level 100, so they knew about this strategy. Since everyone knew this fact, he didn't have to explain any further, and the party didn't ask any questions.

The situation was sorted out.

Hyrkan immediately pointed a finger at a priest.

“Buff.”

“Huh?”

The priest looked dumbfounded as he tilted his head in confusion. Hyrkan spoke as he looked at the priest.

“Please.”

“Ah.”

The priest finally started to give Hykan the Buffs, while he had an awkward smile on his face.

9.

The battle between the Skeleton Warriors, Black Trolls, and Black Orcs was spectacular. The Skeleton Warriors were fighting 10n1 with the monsters. As a Necromancer, the scene unfolding in

front of them was a dream come true.

Even though the battle was spectacular, the result wasn't very good.

The Skeleton Warriors could leave a dent on the monster's armor, but that was the extent of the damage. The monsters didn't even bother blocking their attacks. Since they were being hit on top of the armor, why would they feel pain?

On the other hand, the Skeleton Warriors took significant damage from even a single blow. They dodged well, but once they were hit a part of their body broke off. The ones wearing the Bone Armors fared better, but not by much. Those who didn't have this protection were in a pitiful state once they were hit on the body.

The Golem was in the same boat. With the increase in Skill Rank, the Golem possessed a 5 meter tall frame. At times, the Golem's attack threw back the Orcs and Trolls, but the end result wasn't that great. Moreover, the body of the Golem was becoming ragged with each attack.

The Skeleton Warriors were being destroyed one after another, yet in the end, no monsters had fallen.

They were at a level where they could only buy time.

However, even if they were only buying time, it was enough. The Skeleton Warriors and the Golem was distracting a total of 12 Black

Trolls and Black Orcs. They distracted the monsters for a good amount of time.

The Toon Party and the Alto Family had some breathing room, but they didn't waste the time that was given to them.

“All right. Let's go!”

“Let's counterattack those dirty troll bastards!”

“The Skeleton Warriors are fighting admirably. We have to fight too!”

The very first ones to move was the Tankers. The Tankers had been dispatched into a triangular formation with them at each points, but now they formed a semicircular formation. They formed a wall, and the monsters pounded against the wall.

Kwahng-kwahng!

When the Tankers formed the wall, the mages threw the magics they had prepared over the wall.

The first magic to appear was the Burning Field.

“First, put down the field of fire!”

One of the mage put his palm on the floor. The fire started from his palm, and it started to spread rapidly across the ground.

Hwah-roo-roo-roo!

The Burning Field was most effective when used in a long battle against numerous monsters. It couldn't deal a lot of damage at once, but significant damage accumulated in a long battle.

During all of this, a large drop of water the size of a human started to rise into the air.

“Shoot!”

The floating water drop became a large water arrow when the mage's command fell.

Arrow Ball!

It had the power to crush armors. It had a very powerful ability to pierce through the weakest part of an armor. It was also an attack sent from the sky, so the attack radius was quite large.

The last mage left was a Lightning Mage. He sent a constant stream of low level Lightning Magic called Stun Gun. The monsters had approached the Tankers were affected by the Stun effect. The Black Trolls and Black Orcs that had been continuously attacking the Tankers stopped moving for 1 second.

During all of this, the priests were also moving busily.

“The Holy Metal will end in 30 seconds. Thirty seconds, Neal!”

“The Boiling Blood Magic is going into countdown. I'm in cool time, so someone else do it! 10, 9, 8.....”

“Neal 80 percent, Pyong 79 percent, and Tudors 81 percent. End of Report.”

The role of Priest wasn't all fun and games. With regards to Tankers, the Priest had to calculate the time left on all the Buffs given to the Tankers. If the Buff suddenly ended, an attack could instantly kill the Tanker. The HP calculation was a given. In the latter stages of the game, a single priest used 10 buff magic. The view of the game changes from a game into something akin to what an airplane pilot sees.

The priest would be busily engaged, and the activity would energize the priest.

The Toon Party and Alto Family fought in sync as if they had been fighting together for a long time. One by one the monsters were beginning to be eliminated.

Then Hyrkan started to move.

10.

He put on his hood, and he activated the effect of the Shadow Hunting Dog set. He quickly got closer to the Helm Ogre. The monsters' aggro was focused elsewhere, and the Shadow Dog Set's option allowed him to lessen his presence. There was only one monster here that would be able to notice him.

The only monster that the party hadn't pull the aggro was the Helm Ogre, who stood in the middle of the battlefield.

The bastard realized Hyrkan was getting close before he got there, so the Helm Ogre prepared itself.

The moment Hyrkan approached its attack radius, the bastard attacked first.

Kwahng!

The Helm Ogre's sword impacted on the floor. The floor collapsed as if a meteor had fallen. A crater had formed.

It let out a bone chilling sound indicating the great power of the blow.

However, Hyrkan was nowhere to be seen inside the crater.

Hykan had nimbly avoided the sword, then he brushed by the Helm Ogre. The Helm Ogre turned its body to chase after Hyrkan. Its sword was swung horizontally as it turned its body.

Hooong!

A heavy sound of wind was let out as the sword cut through the empty air. When the Helm Ogre swung at the empty air, Hyrkan stabbed his sword into the space behind the ogre's right knee.

Zzeeeng!

The sword was embedded, but it wasn't embedded deep enough. It only left a small scratch.

‘Twice? No, I have to stab three times.....’

After finishing his move in a flash, Hyrkan widened his distance from the Helm Ogre.

The Helm Ogre glared at Hyrkan. Hyrkan tried to avoid the Helm Ogre's gaze. After avoiding its gaze, he assessed the bastard's armor.

“Hmmm.”

‘I have his measure, but I’m going to have problems piercing it.’

If he wanted to destroy the armor, he had to find out the points where he had to attack. However, he didn't have any information about how to destroy the Helm Ogre's armor. Hyrkan had no way of knowing the Armor Break Points.

He had no choice, but to do this the hard way!

“Countdown!”

Hyrkan raised his voice, and his voice rang out.

Accompanying his shout, the fire that had been spread across the battlefield started to disappear. The magic power that had been supplying the Burning Field had been cut off.

“10, 9, 8!”

Then the countdown was started.

The monster couldn't comprehend what the countdown was about. A single Bulldozer Bear charged towards the Helm Ogre. The Helm Ogre had been focused solely on Hyrkan, so it couldn't avoid the Bulldozer Bear.

Kwahhng!

The sound of two enormous creatures colliding was loud.

Ggoo-ohhhhh!

The Helm Ogre's yell became much more powerful. As the Helm Ogre let out its cry, it looked towards the one, who had used the magic. The mage was far away, but the mage unconsciously swallowed his saliva! The Helm Ogre's gaze was strong enough to make him gulp. The Helm Ogre charged towards the magician.

At that moment, Hyrkan used the Bone Explosive he had been saving. The Bone Explosive worth 300 gold was thrown towards the Helm Ogre.

Kwah-gwahng!

The Bone Explosive's power was considerable, and the Helm Ogre immediately changed its direction towards Hyrkan to attack. It didn't even make any preparations for an attack. It immediately brought down its sword toward Hyrkan.

In a flash, Hyrkan charged towards the Helm Ogre. He passed between its legs. In a breath, Hyrkan was behind the Helm Ogre's back. Then Hyrkan's eyes picked up the present made by the Bulldozer Bear. he saw the cracks that hadn't been there before.

There were numerous gaps that had been formed on the armor from the previous impact.

Hyrkan eyed the gaps as he acted.

Kwah-jeek!

The sword force itself into the gap.

[The Helm Ogre was affected by the Sloth Curse..]

[The Helm Ogre was affected by the Corrosion Ghost.]

[The Helm Ogre was affected by the Demon Curse.]

The curse had begun.

Hyrkan firmly shut his mouth.

11.

When the Strength Stat reaches a certain point for the Warlord User, it was very easy for the user to move one's body. In reality, there was no one that could last by holding onto a nail embedded into a wall . However, when the Strength Stat passes a certain point, tasks like that was quite easy in Warlord.

When a user reaches that level, the user could create a crack, and one could hang indefinitely with one finger inside that crack.

Of course, skill was needed to last long.

The monster's body was constantly moving. Hyrkan was like a brave cowboy riding atop an angry bull except that paled in comparison to what this was like.

One couldn't predict what would happen at any moment. The liquid flowing down the monster's back might be sweat or it could be poison. The body could suddenly emit incredible heat or coldness. A monster could pop out from its back like the movie Alien.

Even a human with a bug on its back would try to roll around the ground to chase the bug away. Monsters did as much or even more to get rid of the pest.

Therefore, the most important aspect was one's adaptability. One needed excellent responses to a situation that was ever changing.

In terms of adaptability, Hyrkan was the best in Warlord.

‘If we can't do this, there is no food for us!’

It took 8 minutes 33 seconds.

Hyrkan finally took off the Helm Ogre's armor. There weren't any singular point he attacked. It was like the dotted line on stamps. He had to make holes to make a dotted line to be able to peel off the armor. It was done with brute force and recklessness. However, Hyrkan didn't have any choice.

It took around 8 minutes to take off only the breastplate. His shoulder armor, gauntlet, helm and greaves were still present. Only his breastplate had fallen off, but its muscular body was revealed.

In some ways, the result was below expectations.

However, if one was a Warlord user, one wouldn't dare say this was below expectations.

“He's more incredible than the video I saw.”

“That's a Necromancer? Who would believe it?”

Hyrkan showed ability that was almost unbelievable.

Of course, while Hyrkan was in the frontline, the rest of the users were plenty active during that time. They diligently lessened the number of monsters through battle. When Hyrkan broke off the Helm Ogre's armor, there were only 4 Black Trolls left. Moreover, there were only 9 monsters left excluding the Black Trolls.

They had halved the number of monsters.

The Toon Party and Alto Family were most definitely strong users. Of course, one couldn't discount the active role the Skeleton Warriors and Golem took part in.

Also, Hyrkan had laid everything on the line.

He didn't skimp on using his Items. Therefore, the Altom Family and the Toon Family decided to use all their consumable items if it came to it. They didn't hold anything back. If one considered the cost of the items consumed in this battle, one could easily buy a small car.

When all the monsters excluding the Helm Ogre was defeated, the main damage dealing started.

“Ee-yah. We finally arrived at this point!”

“The wrapping is all off, so we just have to eat it!”

The magicians began damage dealing in earnest. The Water Arrow shot out by the Aqua Ball pierced through the thick skin of the Helm Ogre. The continuous Lightning Spear was powerful enough for the Helm Ogre to momentarily forget about its anger.

“I'm sending the Bulldozer!”

The mages continuously ate magic recovery candies as they shot out powerful magic. It most definitely damaged the Helm Ogre.

However, it wasn't as if the Helm Ogre did nothing.

Every time the magic impacted the Helm Ogre it chased after the Magicians. The Tankers had to put their lives on the line to stop the frightening charge.

“Ah, shit!”

There were cases where the Tankers were flung backwards as they failed to block the charge.

“Heal! Heal!”

“Wait a moment!”

The Tankers took significant damage, but they didn't hesitate to put their body in the path of the Helm Ogre. While the Tankers killed the clock, Hyrkan moved. Hyrkan stabbed his sword into the Helm Ogre's spine, and the Helm Ogre turned toward Hyrkan in anger.

The accumulated damage changed the Helm Ogre's movements.

When its HP fell below 70%, it used its enormous rage to cause Fear. It reduced everyone's Stats by 30%.

“It's Fear!”

“It would have been strange if this monster didn't have it!”

It even used a dangerous skill called Knife Throw to heavily wound two mages.

“This is crazy. He just threw it? What kind of bastard is this?”

“Koo-roo. Are you ok?”

“Uh. I'm barely alive. I've only got 2% HP left.”

“You are quite composed for someone, who just barely survived.”

“Uh. It's almost 1 percent. Hey, hurry up and heal me.”

“Wait a moment. The Heal cooltime...”

“What? Hey! Hey!”

“I'm kidding.”

When the HP dropped below 40%, it had activated its Steel Skin. The bastard's skin became harder than its armor.

“Stop attacking with Magic! We can't manage the aggro in this state!”

“We have to draw his blood through small attacks!”

“Oh yes! We can rest for a little bit!”

“Uh-whew. Those cheeky mage bastards.”

“If you have a problem, then grow a new character.”

When the HP went below the last 10%, the Helm Ogre went into Rage mode, and it showcased its scary attack capabilities.

“Aigo!”

“Neal flew! He really is flying!”

“This is the first time I've seen him fly.”

“What power.... This is crazy.”

“You guys evade on your own! Tankers won't be able to block its attack!”

A single fist had the power to blow away a Tanker. Everyone froze when they realized what an uphill battle this would be. Who would charge towards a monster that could fling a Tanker away?

There was only one person.

‘I guess I won't have to starve for food tonight.’

Hahoe Mask Hyrkan would bring the Helmo Ogre to its end.

Chapter 71. Secret Society (1)

1.

The background was littered with the corpses of Black Trolls and Black Orcs. The Helm Ogre which had fallen resembled a corpse placed within a royal tomb. The corpse was massive. Rationally, everyone knew it was dead and it couldn't do anything to them. However, this monster had a sense of grandeur that was hard to dismiss.

Hyrkan, Alto Family, and Toon Family all looked at the Helm Ogre's corpse without saying anything.

Numerous thoughts started flowing inside their heads.

‘We really came back from the dead. If I had died here, I would probably be drinking beers until I threw up. I'll probably be watching the last year's World Series, where the fucking Cubs came back to win.’

The members of the Toon Party were just thankful that they were alive.

‘We really have been given a second chance at life. We were lucky. I never expected the Hahoe Mask to come to our help. However, it seems he isn't helping us for free. He'll most definitely suggest something or maybe he'll suggest a deal? What would he ask from us?’

Alto Family was thankful that they were still alive, but they were worried about the cost of their survival.

The last was Hyrkan.

‘It's quite big. It's size is comparable to a Golem. It has to be at least 5 meters tall. If I break it down, I could get a bucketful of gold for the ingredients. What do I have to do to make this all mine? Will it be too much if I took everything? However, if I'm being honest, shouldn't I get everything? No, this is mine. Of course. I was the first to attack, and I also did the Armor Break. I even got the last hit, so of course this is my possession! I also have to get the highest distribution rate for the smallfrys.’

How would he be able to get the bigger share? Only the most materialistic of thoughts occupied his head.

The three groups were sorting out all sorts of thoughts. The first to open the gates of communication was the Toon Party. They had all somewhat sorted out their thoughts. The 5 members of the Toon Party turned towards the other 6 people, then the Toon Party bowed.

“Thank you for helping us.”

Before they spoke their peace, they expressed their thanks. They had come back from the brink of death, so they couldn't help but feel thankful. The Alto Family had helped them despite knowing of the danger. Hyrkan wasn't even a member of the Community, yet

he had helped them as a complete stranger. Moreover, they were at the doorsteps of level 100, so their feeling of gratitude had grown deeper.

They had to be sure to clear up this situation, and their actions should reflect their thankfulness.

“Since we were in a situation where we needed help, we won't argue with you. We'll give up all our rights to the monsters here.”

After hearing those words, Hyrkan's mouth briefly changed into a large smile. It happened for a very brief moment, and it almost stretched his mouth into an outrageous proportion. However, the smile disappeared quickly.

‘Ahn-jaehyun. Control your expression!’

Hyrkan quickly hid his mouth and massaged his mouth. Fortunately, no one had seen Hyrkan's big smile. Of course, he had erased the smile around his face, but the smile inside his heart hadn't been erased.

‘I like it. I really like their stance.’

Hyrkan immediately looked at the Alto Family. Alto Family's leader Neal thought briefly over his decision. As a Tanker, Neal had suffered the most.

‘If I'm being honest, the Helm Ogre belongs to the Hahoe Mask.

However, even if we exclude that one, the rest of the monsters would easily bring 2 to 3 thousand gold easily...'

There were 10 Armored Black Troll, and 20 Armored Black Orcs. They were wearing armor, so without a doubt, metal ingredients needed to produce metal Items could be harvested. That could be turned into coins. It wasn't just one or two coins. It could tally up to couple hundred coins. It wasn't an insignificant amount of gold. If a gem came out, the sum would increase sharply. It could come out to be 2 or 3 thousand gold in the end.

From the perspective of the Alto Family, they didn't want to give up this profit, since they had to recouped the cost of the consumable Items they used in the hunt.

On the other hand, it didn't feel right to unconditionally ask for their cut. Thanks to Hyrkan they came back from the dead. As players, who were at the cusp of reaching level 100, they didn't want to waste their precious time. If it wasn't for Hyrkan, they would have had to calculate for the lost time, instead of the profit.

Neal turned his head to look at his companions. They understood Neal's thoughts, so they immediately answered him.

"It's up to you."

"I have no regret, since I avoided a Game Over."

Of course, they were going to miss the monster corpses strewn

about here. On the other hand, they weren't the materialistic kind of people. They wouldn't ask where their belonging was after being saved from drowning in the water. In the end, Alto Family wasn't solely playing this game for the money.

“Let's calculate, Hahoe Mask.”

Calculate.

Hyrkan clenched his mouth shut at the word. He immediately made a pledge inside.

‘6 to 4 split. I can't give them over 4. It isn't as if they are going to pay for my time. At the very least, I have to get that much.’

Hyrkan was firming up his resolve regarding the calculation.

“We'll give you everything here. Instead, give us permission to take a picture with you.”

After Neal said this, he waved the other people closer.

“Before you skin the monsters' leather, let's take a group picture! Everyone gather around!”

Hyrkan couldn't help, but laugh when he saw this. His head had been completely filled with materialistic thoughts, and calculations. All of this machination came tumbling down at once

like a poorly constructed building.

His thought that had come tumbling down was very seedy. Hyrkan felt mixed emotions.

‘I’m almost envious of their romanticism..’

At that moment, he didn't know why but he envied the people here more than the 30 Great Guild rankers.

2.

There were various types of hunters in this world. There were gunmen who liked hunting with guns. There were archers who like hunting with a bow and arrow. There was also fishermen who liked hunting through fishing. However, all of them had a similar habit.

“The photo came out pretty well.”

“Came out pretty well my ass. It didn't come out well. We are taking it again.”

“We can't take it again. Everyone's already disbanding.”

“Ah, I really have to upload this picture on my account. Why is it coming out like this? If I do this right, I'll gain some subscribers.”

“You have to take off your ugly face if you want to grow the number of subscribers. Just try posting a nude photo of a pretty model.”

“What?”

“Truthfully, isn’t that how it works in reality?”

If one caught something big, everyone always took a picture in front of the big game. It didn't matter if it was an animal or a fish. If one caught something big, even people other than the hunter wanted to pose in front of it. They would take a group photo. This was the instinct of a hunter.

This was the case right now.

Eleven people gathered in front of the enormous Helm Ogre, and they took a picture.

Hyrkan was put in the center. He held back his laughter at the nonsense of this situation as he looked at the picture with him in the center.

‘In the past, I had so many of these pictures that I got sick and tired of it.’

Before he returned to the past, the Hahoe Mask guild always took

a picture after a hunt, especially after a Boss Raid. Moreover, Hyrkan always had stood in the middle of the picture. Every time they had hunted down a monster like this one, Hyrkan took an active role in the battle.

Hyrkan erased the smile on his lips as he thought about the past. Those past events didn't exist anymore. It wasn't as if he would feel better thinking about such memories. He was only left with mixed feelings.

‘Hoo-ooh.’

Hyrkan shook his head to dislodge that train of thought, getting ready to dismantle the monsters.

The dismantling of the monsters took very little time. Hyrkan owned all the monsters here, but the others helped with the task. The job of skinning the leather finished with relative ease. The people gathered here were used to this kind of work. Weren't they high levels because they killed a lot of monsters?

The reward for the hard work was the melting flesh of the monsters. It was ice cream.

“Since this one's dark, I thought it would taste like chocolate. Why does it taste like root beer?”

“This one tastes quite unique. Is it because it's a Boss Monster? It's like a fruit sherbet. The taste is quite profound and

mysterious.”

“I hate sherbet. Don't they have cookies & cream?”

“The most recently caught level 150 monster, Blue Slime Dragon, is said to taste like cookies & cream.”

“I'd rather go to a store nearby instead of going to go catch that monster.”

A conversation started as everyone started eating the melting monster corpses. Still, even during such a friendly conversation, Hyrkan didn't participate. He was eating the ice cream like a pig. He must have had some pent up resentment about not being able to eat it in reality, so Hyrkan kept scooping the ice cream into his mouth as if to assuage this feeling. Neal approached Hyrkan, and he spoke.

“I'm not going to ask you about being in the same Family or Guild. Have you any thoughts on joining this community? I'm not asking for your help. However, there is the aspect of information exchange or cultivating friendship. We spend a decent amount of money on this game. We can't play as well as you, so we'll be in a situation where we'll be holding your ankles. Still, we can be your springboard sometimes .”

Neal didn't want to end the relationship between Hyrkan like this. This had to do with something more than profits. Hyrkan was a very special existence within the world of Warlord.

Hyrkan listened to Neal's words as he looked back with stoic eyes. Hyrkan thought hard on Neal's offer.

‘It isn't too bad.’

The Alto Family was pretty skilled. Truthfully, they wouldn't have been able to reach this point if their skills were terrible.

Moreover, Hyrkan came to an epiphany through their help. He was strong. If one looked through all of Warlord, Hyrkan was the only one who had been able to do the work of a party by himself. He would become much stronger from now on.

However, Hyrkan would be much more powerful if he was hunting with a party. The current Hyrkan was monstrous. However, with the help of a mage, tanker and a priest, he would become a very scary beast.

If he could keep the proper distance between the people who would be helping him, he thought the arrangement might not be too bad.

‘They also know the meaning of romanticism.’

Most of all, the Alto Family weren't people, who devoted their whole lives to this game. They saw the game as a game. The money wasn't the reason why they were playing the game. The money was something on the side, something they made as they played the game. They spent the money they earned for the pure enjoyment

of playing the game. They fell into that category.

They were like the large guilds, who had to make calculated decisions. They were also different from the rankers, who were playing this game to make profit. This meant he could probably foster true friendship with them.

When his thoughts reached that point, Hyrkan shook his head inside his heart.

‘Yes. That is why they won't be compatible with me.’

It wasn't because Hyrkan couldn't get along with these people. They were quality players. It was the opposite for Hyrkan, since he felt he wasn't worthy of them. He was doing this for money and fame. The only thing he was good at was playing games. He had sacrificed his life in reality to catch the money and fame. He wouldn't be a good influence on these people, who were simply playing this game for fun.

Nothing good would come from mixing with them, and he couldn't mix with them.

“I'm sorry.”

Hyrkan slightly lowered his head, shaking it in refusal. When Neal saw this, he shrugged his shoulders.

He didn't feel bad about it. Instead, he felt better, since the

Hahoe Mask had thought about it more seriously than the last time he suggested the enrollment into the community. At the very least, it meant Hyrkan had refused after careful consideration.

“Well, it can’t be helped. I’ll still cheer for you.”

“Thank you.”

“Also, what are you going to do with today's battle footage? No matter how I think about it this is quite an extraordinary bait.”

Hyrkan immediately understood what Neal was saying.

‘Of course, he realized what was going on.’

The dark energy within the pupils was clear evidence that the monsters had been exposed to the power of Corruption. Moreover, even if the Alto Family wasn't on the Corrupt Count's Quest, they had some general knowledge about it, so of course, they realized what was going on. According to his words, it seemed they had recorded everything. When the footage was released, the information about the Helm Ogre would surely spread.

‘Hoo-ooh..’

From Hyrkan's perspective, this development wasn't ideal.

On the other hand, Hyrkan couldn't prevent the info from

getting out even if he tried to block it. The only thing he could do was to ask for them to put a mosaic over his face. If they do that, it was up to the Alto Family and the Toon Party, on whether they want to reveal the information about the Helm Ogre.

Moreover, the first one to find the Helm Ogre had been the Toon Party.

The fact that they were even asking for Hyrkan's input was all out of courtesy.

“If your goal isn't to sell it, you own the rights to the recorded footage. You can do as you like.”

“Is it ok if the Hahoe Mask appears? If you don't want it.....”

“It'll be weirder to upload it with a mosaic over the mask. Just do as you want.”

“Thank you. I really want to keep these kinds of memories as it is.”

Hyrkan let out a light laugh.

Truthfully, he wanted to hide his identity. However, these people weren't trying to make money off of the footage. They were probably going to produce the footage as a memento, so they could reminisce on it. Hyrkan didn't want to mess up their fond memories for his small benefit. They had shown him good

etiquette, so he should do the same.

‘I really can't mix with these types of people.’

This was why he had said they were different from him.

Hyrkan couldn't help it. He became weak when dealing with these types of people. However, Hyrkan didn't want to become soft. In the future, he couldn't become weak.

‘A guy like me is more suited to play with the bastards of the 30 great guilds, who has terrible personalities. I'll play with the greedy and the self-centered bastards.’

Neal, who didn't know what Hyrkan was thinking, put forward his hand. He put forth his right hand.

Hyrkan grabbed his hand.

“If we have a chance to meet next time, let's at least greet each other.”

“All right.”

3.

The information spread across online, and the ripple effect

moved at a surprisingly fast speed.

- Hahoe Mask Hyrkan's Helm Ogre attack!

A diary-like post was uploaded to the SNS, and several pictures were uploaded with the post. The word spread incredibly fast, and it was seen by those who enjoyed Warlord.

- I've attached a clip! This is only a small taste. I will upload the full video later! All right. I will upload it immediately if I get a 1000 likes!

The video was soon released. It wasn't uploaded by the Hahoe Mask Hyrkan himself, but it was enough to bring several hundred thousand people to view it. Amongst the several hundred thousand people viewing the Hahoe Mask Hyrkan, there members of the 30 great guilds also included in the figure. A lot of them were watching it for the Main Scenario Quest.

The Helper.

Most in the 30 great guilds called The Helper when they needed support. The Helper had seen the video of Hyrkan.

“He fights incredibly well.”

“He had no prior information, yet he did an Armor Break. His skills are almost unbelievable.”

“He looks like a guy, who played this game for 5 to 6 years?”

Everyone was surprised by Hyrkan's skill.

However, there was something else that surprised them even more.

“The Hahoe Mask didn't go to Parung Forest to level up. We've basically confirmed he went there for the main scenario quest.”

“The next location after Bulkas mountain was the Parung Forest? Aren't the Stormhunter Guild progressing along the same route?”

“Does this mean the Hahoe Mask's Main Scenario Quest is progressing at a faster pace than the Storm Hunters?”

They had found out the reason why the Hahoe Mask stayed at the Parung forest, and the reason made them even more surprised.

“The guild behind the Hahoe Mask is carrying out the Main Quest Scenario from outside our control.”

“Are the Hydra Guild doing this without our knowledge? They have the ability to be the furthest along on the Main Scenario Quest within the 30 great guilds. We even missed out on the Corrupt Count.”

“It could be the Stormhunter Guild. This route happens after the Bulkas Mountains. That's the route taken by the Stormhunters.”

“Someone has to hurry up and take measures against him. Isn't that the reason why we are receiving this money?”

Chapter 72. Secret Society (2)

4.

‘It's finally here.’

When he arrived at the Bulkas Range's village, Hyrkan was thankful this was only a game.

‘I ran for the whole day. Shit.’

If this wasn't a game, Hyrkan would have been drenched in sweat. He would be on the floor trying to catch his breath.

‘Why doesn't Warlord have something like a Warp gate? It would be quite convenient if they made something like that.’

He complained for a brief moment, but afterwards, Hyrkan was thankful for the stylish leather armor he was wearing.

‘Fortunately, I was lucky enough to have purchased the Shadow Dog set. If not, I would have ended the game in anger.’

After he defeated the Helm Ogre in the Parung Forest, he gathered all the ingredients for coins. Then Hyrkan immediately moved towards the castle closest to the Parung Forest. Even at his top speed, the closest castle was about a half day away. It was very far away.

However, he had no choice. He couldn't sell the miscellaneous ingredient coins he obtained from the Helm Ogre at a reduced price. It was impossible for him to carry these items around, and a storage where he could deposit the items were only available at a castle.

After he visited the castle, he immediately ran towards the Bulkas Range's village.

He wanted to finish his quest before his exploits spread.

‘I've worked hard like a dog, so shouldn't it be coming out soon? Is it going to give me another test?’

He had to find the Maeung to complete the quest.

Hyrkan's thoughts drifted towards the Maeung. His thoughts once again recalled the flow of the Main Scenario Quest.

‘The Society should be coming out soon.....’

One would become a member of the Secret Society through the Maeung. The most important part of this was to proceed on the story of the Immoral Prince.

‘I really want to put on the Society Ring really soon....’

Moreover, the benefits he would earn as a member of the Secret Society was enormous.

‘Yes. The Society Ring is on the line, so I have to be patient. Patience. Patience is winning.’

Hyrkan pulled himself together and he soon met the Maeung. He told the Maeung about the Helm Ogre, and the Maeung put on a very serious expression when he heard Hyrkan's story.

“Unfortunately, it seems my prediction has come to pass.”

The Maeung was sincere and he had a heavy atmosphere around him.

Hyrkan didn't unnecessarily pour cold water on such an atmosphere. Instead, he played up that atmosphere.

“What are you saying? Do you perhaps know the identity of these monsters?”

“Mmmm.”

The Maeung swallowed what he was about to say at Hyrkan's question.

1 second, 2 second, 3 second..... As he was watched the Maeung hesitate, Hyrkan kept cursing inside.

Finally, the Maeung opened his mouth.

“If it's you..... I'll be able to trust you.”

Maeung's Trust.

This was what he earned the this Quest. It allowed the Maeung speak out from his heart.

“From a certain point in time, the number of monsters in the world increased exponentially. The appearance of the Subjugation Association gave us some breathing room. However, a power appeared recently, and it can topple the balance we achieved.”

“I know about it. I also... I've also chased after the power of Corruption before.”

Hyrkan wanted to speed up the conversation, so he tried to lead the conversation.

“Mmmm. Any ways, the power of Corruption allowed the monsters to become strong. On the other hand, I found out there was another ability that comes with the power.”

Even though Hyrkan tried to lead the conversation, the Maeung ignored Hyrkan's words. Hyrkan couldn't help, but smirk inside at the Maeung. Moreover, Hyrkan was already well aware of the

other ability that came with the power of Corruption.

‘He's going to say it is the power to control the monsters.’

“It is the power to control the monsters.”

“Ah.”

Hyrkan acted as if he was surprised. As if he was satisfied with Hyrkan's response, the Maeung continued to speak.

“The monsters exposed to the power of Corruption doesn't act according to their instincts. They move with forethought as if they are carrying out orders. This means someone is controlling these monsters. In truth, the Corrupt Count also used the power of Corruption to control the monsters, and he used them as underlings.”

“However, isn't the Corrupt Count dead?”

“Yes. The Corrupt Count died at the hands of heroes.”

Heroes!

Hyrkan grumbled inside when he heard those words.

'Heroes? Bullshit. Those bastards make unreasonable demands

when things don't go their way.'

Hyrkan swallowed his dissatisfaction that was about to burst forward.

“However, is the Corrupt Count the only person able to use the Power of Corruption? Moreover, the Corrupt Count is dead, so why does the monsters with power Corruption continue to show up?”

The Maeung's speech was finally reaching the end. The light within Hyrkan's eyes was slowly changing.

‘Uh. The story is proceeding faster than I expected?’

“That means there is someone else behind this.”

Hyrkan had a different look in his eyes. He quickly said the right words to enthusiastically agree with the Maeung.

“That person must be an extraordinary person. I won't even dare to tell you who it is. I have my suspicions but I cannot speak about it in this place right now. However, it is someone with authority. There is a high possibility that the person is a lord or a noble. Perhaps the Corrupt Count was just this person's lackey.”

“It really is a frightening thought. A person akin to the Corrupt Count still exists on this world. Moreover, if it is someone, who could order around the Corrupt Count as an underling...”

“It is rather a big problem. The death of the Corrupt Count would embed a sense of caution in that group. The next time they show themselves it would be after they finished getting ready to battle the world.”

As the Maeung spoke, he opened a drawer.

‘Is it coming? Is it really coming out right now? Really?’

Hyrkan swallowed his saliva as he looked on.

“I'm telling you all of this since you have the courage and ability to be able to share a common cause with me. Moreover, you have a noble mind. You would lay down your life for the world.”

The Maeung praised Hyrkan. It was a very high praise. However, not a single word of the Maeung entered Hyrkan's ears.

‘Ah!’

The Maeung had taken out a ring from the drawer. Hyrkan's thoughts turned blank when he caught sight of the ring.

‘Finally!’

This was the item. He had always wanted this item, but he could never possess it. That item had shown up in front of his eyes.

“Please help me save the world from the immoral people who are using the power of Corruption.”

‘Finally, the Society Ring will be in my possession.’

Hyrkan didn't worry about it. He was like a machine. He answered the Maeung without even thinking about it.

“Yes! Give me any task!”

At that moment, a notice popped up.

[You've earned the 'Secret Society' title.]

The title had appeared.

‘All right! The Society Title!’

This was what he had been waiting for.

Also, this wasn't the end.

“Thank you for accepting such an unreasonable request. However, I would like to introduce you to someone. After crossing the Parung Forest, you will reach the Great Urugal mountain range after you travel a little bit more. When you reach the entrance of

the mountains, you will find a blacksmith by the name of Olf. Go find him. If you show him the ring, he won't kill you at the very least."

[Quest 'Blacksmith Olf' is starting.]

A Quest had appeared.

Hyrkan frowned a little bit when he heard the quest. He knew the names of Blacksmith Olf and the Great Urugal mountain range.

The Great Urugal mountain range bisected the world. Moreover, no one had been able to cross it as of yet. The Ruined Kingdom existed across this mountain range.

'Aren't all the basic monsters that come out over there over level 100?'

Currently, it was a land of death for any users in Warlord right now. It was a place where only the very top rankers could eliminate the monsters, and they would be able to survive only if they put survival as the highest priority.

'Uh-whew. It makes me want to barf just thinking about it.'

It wouldn't be strange if one died, while traveling to that place.

Blacksmith Olf was a very famous NPC in this game. He was only

a select few NPC that was able to make Epic Items. He was an Ahimbree Rank NPC.

In many ways, it wasn't a person a level 80 user could approached.

‘If I die on the road, I would be dying a dog's death.’

Hyrkan was worried.

However, his worry melted away when he saw the very plain golden ring given to him by the Maeung.

“This ring is a pledge. Anyone, who has this token, shares the same cause as us. We don't have a name. We just call ourselves the Secret Society.”

Secret Society's Ring.

It was now in Hyrkan's possession.

5.

Halfway up the Bulkas mountain.

A user wearing a hood was using a tree stump as chair, and he was looking at something.

[Secret Society]

Title Effect : Every Stat is increased by 3%.

The user's identity was Hyrkan.

After receiving 3 presents from the Maeung, Hyrkan soon arrived at the Ranger Village. He did this, because he had pursuers following him. As he had expected, several users followed after him when he came out of the Maeung's house. He was moving to lose them and, in the end, he had arrived at this location.

It was annoying, but it was the price of becoming famous. This was a problem he would have to overcome as he progressed in the future.

On the other hand, there was a positive outcome that came out of this. As he was losing his tail, he was able to cool his red-hot head. He had suddenly been put in this situation, therefore he was able to organize his gains.

‘Ok. This makes it 9%.’

The Secret Society title he had earned this time was a percentage title. If he combined it with the Ahimbree's Disciple, and the Rising Star title he got before, then all of his Stats would increase by 9%.

‘There isn't much content to the Quest.’

On top of it all, the explanation regarding the Quest was quite simple. It told him to go to the entrance of the Urugal mountain range, and he was to meet Olf there. There was no reward to the quest. It simply said to go meet him.

The important thing wasn't the quest. Instead, it was the gold ring equipped on Hyrkan's hand. Hyrkan manipulated the time, and he put up the option for the ring on a hologram window.

[Proof of the Secret Society]

*Main Properties

- Unique Rank Item
- All Stat +77
- Required Level : Level 70 and up
- Required Condition : Title ‘Secret Society’

*Sub-Properties

- Stamina and Magic Power recovers 20% faster.

- When one has the title 'Pursuer of Corruption', the stat related to profession +22

- This item belongs to the wearer.

*Miscellaneous

- It is a token of the Secret Society, who chases after the power of Corruption. The great blacksmith devoted his heart and soul to make this ring. He used gold that was eaten and thrown up by a dragon as ingredient. It carries an enormous power.

It felt as if his eyes would pop out just from looking at the options. The options to the ring were quite spectacular.

‘It's in my possession now.’

Hyrkan laughed.

He couldn't help but laugh.

The Proof of the Secret Society!

If he recalled the memory before he came back to the past, the item's existence and option was revealed by the Hydrdra Guild. The first one to take down the Corrupt Count was the Hydra Guild. They even showed a remarkable pace during the Immoral Prince portion of the quest. They were the first one to acquire the Proof of

the Secret Society.

Moreover, when the option was first revealed, everyone had the same reaction.

It was a cheat item!

It was an item that broke the balance!

Hyrkan also had a similar response.

He couldn't help it.

Basically, if one wanted to earn this Item, one needed to have the Pursuer of Corruption title. The Stat relating to the occupation was 99 points, and the rest of the Stats were 77 Points. If he included the Stats that would increase, the total sum was 352 Points. It was an incredible figure.

However, the real reason why people called this a cheat item was the recovery speed increase option for the Stamina and Magic Power. Buffs that increased recovery speed was in existence, but there were very few items which had that option. If an item such as this was used by a Tanker with a lot of Stamina or a Priest with a lot of Magic Power, they would recover more than they expend.

It wasn't only them. It was very popular for Strikers or Mages, who were always short on Stamina and Magic Power.

Also, this was an item that could only be used by the select few. It was possible to earn it during the Immoral Prince's storyline. In the end, only 179 of them would be released. It seemed like a high figure, but if one considered the number of people playing Warlord, it was an extremely small number.

Hyrkan had always wanted this item, and he thought he would be able to obtain it this time around.

However, he never expected to get it so fast.

Hyrkan kept looking at his hand with the ring from various angles. He was like a new bride, who had just received a 10 karat wedding ring.

The smile wouldn't leave his lips.

‘It makes me full just by looking at it.’

It really felt as if his stomach was full just from looking at it. Of course, he wasn't really full in reality.

Hyrkan checked the time.

‘It's dinner time.’

It was time to fill his stomach for real. He checked the

surrounding before the log out. Hyrkan immediately started the procedure to log out.

[The log out countdown will start. 10, 9, 8.....]

Then the countdown started.

‘Yes. This is the feeling. Let's eat until my stomach bursts today! The Society Ring came out, so I can celebrate by eating a steak.’

Hyrkan smiled as he tried to decided whether he wanted to eat a sirloin steak, a beef tenderloin, or a t-bone steak. He started thinking about this happy dilemma.

6.

Bubble, bubble.

Ahn-jaehyun had a corpse-like expression as he looked at the boiling ramen, which was emitting a spicy scent.

“Shit.”

When the ramen was close to boiling, a bitter sound came out of Ahn-jaehyun's mouth.

Not too long ago, Ahn-jaehyun decided to splurge big time today.

He was going to eat a steak today. He had made enough money to afford it. He earned the ingredient coins including the ones from the Helm Ogre. There was the renewed donations and the youtube ad money coming in. If he combined all his income, he had 2 month worth of living expense. After he paid the monthly Warlord subscription fee, he had just enough to pay for the installments on the newly purchased Level 4 V Gear.

However, a single notification changed Ahn-jaehyun's dinner menu from a steak to a ramen.

[A special promotion for those, who purchased the 3rd and 4th level V GEAR! This is a unique chance to upgrade to the 5S Model!]

He would have to pay an additional thousand dollars every month for the next 2 years. When he received the notification for the order of the 5s Model V Gear, Ahn-jaehyun didn't even worry over his decision.

‘I have to have this.’

The level 6 Model was going to be released soon, so he knew this promotion was done to clear the inventory. However, the level 5S Model was much superior for Warlord than the 6S Model. No one knew this fact right now, but Ahn-jaehyun knew the truth. Of course, the 6S Model was the best, but it was a Model that couldn't be purchased by Ahn-jaehyun. In his current situation, the newest model he would be able to purchase was the 5S Model. He would have to increase his monthly payment by 1000 dollars to earn the newest equipment. Ahn-jaehyun would never say no to that.

Of course, he pulled the trigger.

The phrase 'first come, first serve' didn't allow Ahn-jaehyun to even think about the decision.

This was obvious, but he now had additional monthly expense. Instead of getting the steak, he had to settle by getting a beef-flavored ramen.

After he turned off the gas stove, Ahn-jaehyun shook his head from side to side.

'What's the point of earning money? Every cent I earn goes right back into the game.'

He let out a grumble as he raised his chopsticks to swirl the ramen. He saw a small piece of beef inside the ramen. It was the size of a baby's nail. Ahn-jaehyun delicately picked up the little piece of meat.

It had been a while since Ahn-jaehyun had tasted beef.

Chapter 73. Secret Society (3)

7.

- This is to be expected from the Hahoe Mask.
- Are you putting up the Hahoe Mask part too? I'll be waiting.
- Isn't he better at Armor Break than most rankers? I don't know why he is a Necromancer
- If we look at the Helm Ogre's eyes, can we tell if it is a Corrupt monster?
- I looked at it closely after I read the post above. There is a black marbling in his eyes, so it's 100% Corrupt.
- So the Corrupt Monster was at the Parung Forest. It is a main quest monster. I guess I'll have to go there once.

The video garnered over 100,000 comments. Choi-sulyeon angrily scrolled down with her smartphone to read the comments left below the video. She scrolled up endlessly, and as if she didn't want to see it anymore, Choi-sulyeon turned off the smartphone's screen. Her reflection was seen when the screen turned black, and her face was filled with irritation, and discontent. However, she still looked beautiful.

‘Which guild is in the possession of the Hahoe Mask?’

Hahoe Mask Hyrkan.

He couldn't be called a super rookie any more. Now the 30 great guild had their eyes out for him. He was a topic of conversation, and he was talked about as much as any of the rankers. Moreover, his skills were already acknowledged by the rankers. Even with the same level, class and items, no one could easily guarantee that they will win against the Hahoe Mask in a 1on1 matchup.

On top of that, he had chosen the class of Necromancer, and it meant he had intimate understanding of this game, which allowed him to become as strong as he was now. All the guilds coveted him. The 30 great guilds and the influential guilds were focusing on growing Necromancers now. However, the final product paled in comparison to Hyrkan.

Currently, the 30 great guild thought Hyrkan was attached to a guild. They determined there must be a guild sponsoring him. If that wasn't the case, they couldn't come up with an explanation regarding the Hahoe Mask's play. It was impossible to accept his success if that wasn't the case.

That was the reason why Choi-sulyeon was angry.

She was irritated he wasn't within her grasp. Moreover, it made her much more irritated when that person was within another person's grasp.

‘How the hell are they in front of us?’

The guild with the Hahoe Mask in their grasps was farther along in the Main Scenario Quest than the Stormhunter guild. She wasn't annoyed by it. She was seriously worried about this problem.

Choi-sulyeon gritted her teeth.

She wanted to look for a decisive method, where they would be able flip the situation. However, she felt frustrated, since she couldn't come up with any ideas.

At that moment, her smartphone suddenly rang. She saw a familiar number on the screen.

‘A call?’

Usually, he contacted her through the chatting app. There must really be an urgent business if he was calling her directly.

Choi-sulyeon answered her phone.

“What is it?”

- It's a breaking news.

“Do you really need to deliver this news by calling me?”

Choi-sulyeon's voice was sharp. The officer of the Stormhunters, who had contacted her, realized Choi-sulyeoun was in a foul mood. He immediately told her the news without any preamble.

- Triple Wing and Big Smile just declared war.

“How bad is it?”

The light in Choi-sulyeon's eyes changed. Of course, she knew those guilds. Those two guilds were part of the the 30 great guilds.

- It's almost an all-out-war.

“That is a breaking news.”

When the call ended, Choi-sulyeon moved quickly.

‘IS the Corrupt being finally coming out?’

For a brief moment, she stopped worrying about the Hahoe Mask.

[Your Level has risen.]

When he successfully achieved level up, the Black Troll skewered by Hyrkan fell forward. Hyrkan extracted his sword from the Black Troll's body. Hyrkan looked around his surrounding, then he lowered his guard. The Skeleton Warriors, who had been in their fighting stance, relaxed as they took cue from their master. Hyrkan gathered them around him.

Hyrkan checked his Stats, while he was in the midst of the Skeleton Warriors.

[Hyrkan]

- Level : 80

- Class : Magician

- Title : 40

- Stats : Strength(762)/Stamina(321)/Intelligence(491)/Magic Power(605)

‘The effect of the ring is killer.’

He invested his Level Up bonus points to Intelligence, and he couldn't believe his Stats even though he was looking right at it. There wasn't any indication here, but the effect of the Stamina and

Magic Power recovery increase option was quite devastating. Currently, Hyrkan barely felt the lack of Magic Power.

That wasn't all.

‘This 5s Model was really well made. It feels completely different from the Level 4 Model.’

The Level 5S Model was worth its cost. He didn't regret cutting his daily spending money for food and basic necessities.

This two factors allowed Hyrkan to basically slaughter the monsters inside the Parung Forest.

‘It's time for me to graduate from here.’

In other words, he had outgrown the Parung Forest.

Of course, he would be able to become level 100 by staying at the Parung Forest. In fact, most of the users hunting in the Parung Forest right now were at least level 90. However, Hyrkan was able to take down stronger monsters than the ones here. He wanted something with better exp.

‘Also, there are more people here now.’

Above all else, when the footage of the Helm Ogre was released, the users over level 100 flocked towards the Parung Forest. These

users were the ones, who picked up the scent of the Main Scenario Quest. Now the 30 great guilds would do anything to send their guild members this way. His competitors will increase. Moreover, those who were jealous of Hyrkan's fame would try to start a fight with him for no reason.

At this point, Hyrkan thought hard about his decision.

‘It would really be hard for me to go to the great Urugal mountain range right now.’

If he was currently level 90, Hyrkan would have headed towards the great Urugal mountain range. The difference of 10 levels was quite significant.

“Hoo-ooh.”

Hyrkan let out a troubled sigh.

‘Let's take care of this first.’

Hyrkan momentarily halted his worrying thoughts, and he started dismantling the Troll's corpse. He peeled off the leather with a deft touch, and he waited for the Troll to melt away. In that brief amount of time, he found an article on the Internet.

‘The Triple Wing and Big Smile is going at it for real.’

The current hot news in Warlord was the fight between the members of the 30 great guilds.

It was Big Smile vs Triple Wing.

Big Smile was a guild consisting of mainly Chinese users. They were top 3 within the 30 great guilds in terms of membership. Triple Wing had users from all over the place, so it was meaningless to associate any country with the guild. Like Big Smile, they were also one of the top 3 guilds in terms of having the most members.

These two guilds had diversified their businesses. Since they had a lot of users, they had their hands in a lot of things. Whether it was the Main Scenario Quest, PVP, Raid, or regular hunting, they created a lot of contents regarding Warlord.

On the other hand, they didn't have a sure-fire content they could fall back on. Since both guilds operated in a similar way, the two guilds clashed quite often. They considered each other to be competitors.

‘Wow. They intruded on a Raid? They were always on bad terms, but this seems to be more serious.’

This conflict didn't look ordinary even in Hyrkan's eyes.

Moreover, it was a very big deal that the Big Smile had intruded on a Triple Wing's Raid.

The guild members always bumped heads with each other on the road, and they had frequent skirmishes. However, it was something that could be overlooked. However, if one interrupted a raid, it was a statement saying one didn't care if they died or the other side died. It basically meant the fight was on and they weren't going to put any time limit to it! The act perpetrated was egregious enough to elicit this response.

Before Hyrkan returned to the past, the two guilds had a bad relationship with each other, but it wasn't enough to elicit such a desperate struggle.

‘Is it because of me?’

There was a high probability that Hyrkan was the main cause of this event.

This was commonly called the butterfly effect.

Hyrkan had returned to the past, and this was the result of him changing the history. He had already massively fucked over the Hydra guild. If such factors start to mount, there was a high probability that it culminated into these two guilds going to war.

Of course, he didn't feel a single inkling of guilt at the sight of the two guilds colliding with each other.

No, he was thankful instead.

‘Yes. I hated seeing both these guilds. It would be great if they both go under from the fighting.’

He didn't have any good feelings towards these two guilds. When the Stormhunter guild decided to chase Hyrkan out of Warlord, they had sought the cooperation of the 30 great guild. A ragtag group from the Triple Wing and Big Smile had attacked Hyrkan to gain notoriety. They didn't even fight him one on one. They gave some bullshit excuse saying it was his judgement day. About half a dozen of them attacked Hyrkan.

Those mother fuckers.

Except....

‘Just by looking at this, you never know what will happen in this world.’

This thought acted as a catalyst.

‘Wait a moment.’

This was a catalyst that changed Hyrkan's train of thought.

‘Was Ahimbree also a member of the Society?’

Hyrkan glanced at his left hand.

‘What would happen if I meet Ahimbree, while wearing this ring?’

9.

The list of his worries was long.

‘If I go to the Bagntz castle to meet Ahimbree and come back to the Parung forest, the round trip would take a whole day. Will I be wasting my time?’

It would take him at least a day to go meet Ahimbree. From Hyrkan's perspective, the one day's time made him hesitate. If he couldn't earn anything from Ahimbree, he would basically wasting his precious time.

‘Ahimbree is a NPC that gives a Skill Book later at level 200. Let's go meet him at least once.’

Ahimbree was a mainstay NPC in Warlord. Hyrkan would see this NPC several times in the future. He had a cause to contact Ahimbree, yet should he leave him alone? Hyrkan thought hard on it, and he came up with an answer.

‘Anyways, I can't immediately approach the great Urugal mountain range right now. If I die on the way there, I'll receive a 48 hour penalty. That would hurt more.’

After making his decision, he sought out the Bangtz castle after a long absence to meet Ahimbree.

It wasn't too hard to meet Ahimbree.

“You are his student.”

Normally, if one didn't have a quest, it was impossible to meet Ahimbree. In Hyrkan's case, he had earned the title of Ahimbree's Disciple. This was another power of that title.

This was how he was able to meet Ahimbree.

“I've heard about you from the Maeung. You are now a member of the Society.”

When Ahimbree saw Hyrkan, he immediately brought up the story about the Society. Hyrkan was filled with anticipation.

“Yes. I am proud of becoming a member of the Society.”

“I also feel happiness at seeing you pick the right path.”

“No. You are the reason why I was able to earn such an opportunity.”

“Let's end the pleasantries here. The Society's role is very important, and at the same time, it has to be kept as an utmost secret. Our enemies are everywhere. They are men with influence. You have to be careful. Moreover, you have to get stronger. Our enemies are strong as they could be.”

Hyrkan sounded out his feelings at that moment.

“That part worries me greatly.”

“Worry?”

“I've received a mission from the Maeung. However, it is a mission I cannot carry out with my current ability. I'm not afraid to die, but I am afraid of failing the mission.”

Those words made Ahimbree stare intently at Hyrkan. Maybe the programming and the AI was assessing Hyrkan's situation, and it was calculating to come up with an answer. However, it really felt as if this other being was giving careful consideration instead of a calculation.

Basically, it didn't feel like a game.

‘Sometime, this kind of stuff scares me a little bit.’

Hyrkan held his breath when Ahimbree opened his mouth.

“Do you want to become stronger?”

“I think that would allow me to defend the world from this Corrupt group.”

“You need power, so you can save the world from the monsters?”

“Yes.”

“Then this is the only preparation I can give you.”

After Ahimbree spoke, he took out a piece of paper. He placed the paper on top of the desk, and he tapped a fallen pen with his finger. The pen got up by itself, and it started to busily dance on top of the paper. The pen started dancing from the top, and it came to a stop at the bottom. The pen fell over as if it was exhausted. Ahimbree placed the pen aside, and he folded the paper. Then he lifted it towards Hyrkan.

Hyrkan approached closer to Ahimbree, and he took the paper.

Ahimbree gave a stern warning to Hyrkan.

“If you want power to fight then you have no choice but to grow it through fighting.”

[Quest ‘Ferocious Battlefield’ as begun.]

Ahimbree gave him an admission ticket into the Battlefield.

10.

Heh-bibin, who was one of the officers in Big Smile, covered his face with both hands. He did this even while a breathless battle was happening in front of him. He had on a very worried look. Until a moment ago, he had been busy throwing magic in the hunting ground. However, the number of viewers for the most recent broadcast made him act this way.

‘The number of viewers are plummeting.’

The recent war between Triple Wing and Big Smile didn't bring smiles to anyone. Instead, it made everyone sad.

The all out war with the Triple Wing wasn't ending easily. Instead, it had ballooned into something they couldn't control. During all of this , the viewership didn't expand. Instead, the number of viewers watching Big Smile's broadcast was greatly reduced. With the all-out-war with a member of the 30 great guild looming, this drop in viewership was a very serious issue for Big Smile.

“Fuck. That Brook bastard. He's an officer yet he made such a mess like this!”

In the end, Heh-bibin exploded.

Big Smile's officer Brook was the main culprit, who had started this all-out-war. He wanted to cut Brook into pieces.

A small incident with the Triple Wing was the root cause of this all-out-war.

Brook had reached out on Triple Wing's SNS, and he had criticized them. Of course, the Triple Wing demanded an apology. They wanted Brook to put up an apology post on the SNS. Instead of an apology, Brook had put up insults.

‘Crazy bastard. He should have nipped it in the bud. If I was the Guild Master, I would have cut this bastard from the roster!’

In the first place, Brook lived by feeding off of his own pride. He was a selfish guy, who only thought about himself rather than the others around him. Still, Heh-bibin never expected this guy to be this crazy.

In the end, the Raid had detonated the beginning of this war.

Brook led his personal troops to conduct a Boss Monster Raid, and someone had interrupted it. The interloper was a member of the Triple Wing guild. However, the initial fault was with the Triple Wing, so they had given an apology. The apology was basically consisted of an 'I'm sorry.' Brook couldn't hold himself back.

Brook didn't send a report to his guild. He took his personal troops to the nearest Triple Wing's Raid, and he interfered with them.

This was the end result.

‘We need a turnaround.’

They had focused their forces towards the war with the Triple Wing, so the content of their usual broadcasts were becoming poor. It was affecting their viewership numbers. If their viewership numbers decreased, it would affect the money they earn from sponsorship.

It would finally lead to the live channel being given to a different guild.

The situation was keep getting worse.

This was why Heh-bibin was looking for an opportunity to turn this situation around. There needed to be some kind of change.

However, such an opportunity was hard to come by.

‘Isn't there anything suitable?’

At that moment, Heh-bibin received a text. When he heard the notification for an incoming text, Heh-bibin frowned.

‘Apollo. Why is this guy sending me a text?’

The ID indicated it was from Apollo.

He was Heh-bibin's personal patron. Apollo was wealthy, and he had given considerable monetary support to several officers in the Big Smile Guild, which mainly consisted of Chinese users.

Of course, Heh-bibin had kept a respectful distance from him. He knew Apollo wanted to make a guild in his own namesake, so it wasn't proper to be in contact with him. However, he had already taken Apollo's money. At the very least, he could give Apollo his attention.

Heh-bibin opened the text.

Chapter 74. Battlefield (1)

1.

[Battlefield]

- Quest Rank : Rare

- Quest Level Range : Over 80, Equal or below level 100.

- Quest Content : Battlefield. Please get rid of all the monsters across the Terube castle walls.

- Quest Reward : The Reward changes depending on the number of monsters killed.

Hyrkan had a queer expression on his face as he looked at the content of the Quest.

‘I never expected to have the opportunity to run a Battlefield in this fashion.’

Battlefield.

The hunting content that exemplified Warlord after the the Boss Monster Raid was the Battlefield.

The Battlefield was a stage where the monsters would be crawling all over the place. Ordinarily, there was a standard castle wall, and the field across it was the stage for the Battlefield. Only the skilled users acknowledged by the Subjugation Association was able to go into a Battlefield. Hyrkan had received the Battlefield Admission Pass from Ahimbree, and it was a form of a ticket.

‘It is a hellhole overflowing with money.’

The Battlefield's regen system was turned up higher compared to a normal Dungeon or a field hunting ground. There were a lot more monsters, and they appeared at a faster rate. The monsters were endless even if one kept killing them. Moreover, only the users who satisfied a prerequisite condition could go in.

It was basically a land overflowing with monsters.

Of course, it was dangerous. However, the danger came with great EXP, and the reward was quite good.

If one performed well on the Battlefield, the Subjugation Association would acknowledge the player publicly. The public notoriety one could gain wasn't comparable to the one gained through the Quests given by the Subjugation Association. Once one build one's reputation from the Subjugation Association, one could gather further titles, and later on one could gain authority within Warlord. It wasn't a reward that could be ignored.

However, the fact that there was a lot of monsters wasn't why this hunting content was the most popular one after the Raids.

There was always an Event Quest attached to the Battlefield Quest.

The content of the Event Quest was usually about catching a certain monster. If one was able to catch this specific monster, the Reward was quite significant.

'The jackpot Rewards appeared at a Battlefield for users over level 200.... It ranged from one thousand gold to the appearance of a Unique Item. It was unexpectedly big time.'

On top of this, the Event Quest was given to multiple parties, and it happened simultaneously.

Naturally, there was a competition to catch the Boss Monster.

This was why this event was fun. Usually, one had to wait one's turn when a Boss Monster appeared. That was the etiquette. However, this concept was useless on the Battlefield. One had to use every ways and means to kill the target monster on the Battlefield! Basically, that was the rule.

It was a form of chaos allowed by Warlord.

Some users enjoyed the Battlefield fights more than the Boss Monster Raids.

This was a stage that suited Hyrkan's style. Unexpectedly, Hyrkan hadn't participated much on the Battlefield stage. One had to gain a reputation, complete tasks, and be acknowledged for

one's skill by the Subjugation Association. Only then would one be able to gain a pass into the Battlefield. The Hahoe Mask Guild had mainly focused on Boss Monster Raids, so of course, he didn't have much opportunity to do this.

‘This will be fun.’

This was the reason why Hyrkan had a queer expression on his face.

This would be fun, However, he also knew that he hadn't been able to do this in the past, because he hadn't been in a situation where he could compete in this battle.

Of course, this wasn't a stage for users, who soloed. The basic party structures numbered between 5 to 7 members on the Battlefield. On the very large Battlefield stage, one could create a party up to 30 members. Of course, that was an exception to the rule.

Basically, Hyrkan had to go up against 7 member parties. It wouldn't be easy.

As mentioned before, the Battlefield didn't have any rules. It was quite common to see PKs.

If it was the old Hyrkan, he would have dispassionately made a decision, and he would have ripped the Battlefield Admission Ticket into pieces.

However, the current Hyrkan was different.

‘Below level 100...’

Hyrkan would enter a Battlefield where the users would be between level 80 and level 100.

‘At least, there won’t be a lot of users here, who went through the 1st Promotion.’

It says up to level 100, so there might be some users who went through the promotion already. They’ll be hard to deal with, but the users below that level won’t be too hard to deal with if he was being honest. Moreover, he had earned the proof of the Secret Society. Hyrkan’s battle capability was amazing.

‘It won’t be easy, but it isn’t impossible.’

Moreover, Warlord users were romantics.

The act of soloing a Boss Raid Monster, or soloing the Battlefield also fell into this sense of romanticism.

Of course, if the outcome was favorable, one could also expect a tidy profit from the footage.

‘Anyways, I can’t immediately go to the Urugal mountain range

right now, and I need more money.'

It wasn't too hard for Hyrkan to make his decision.

2.

"You want me to get rid of the Hahoe Mask?"

A greasy, slow and inarticulate voice flowed into Heh-bibin's ear.

- Yes. I beg of you.

The main character of the voice was Apollo's guild master, Apollo. His voice made Heh-bibin feel uncomfortable.

"The Hahoe Mask..... What's the reason?"

- He insulted our guild.

Heh-bibin, who had been listening to Apollo's story, had to stop himself from laughing at Apollo in ridicule.

'Insulted? What a joke.'

Apollo guild was the one disgracing the Apollo guild. They were doing it to themselves. They put strength above all else, and they

basically acted with poor manner. How could such a guild be insulted any further? That was the real question here.

However, Heh-bibin only showed his true feeling through his expression. He didn't say it out loud.

‘I guess I've gone as far as I can go.’

Normally,when Apollo brought such requests, he would give various reasons or no reason at all when he firmly turned down Apollo.

Big Smile Guild was one of the 30 great guild, and Heh-bibin was one of the officers in that guild. If he personally helped out the Apollo Guild, wouldn't he be inviting trouble by doing so?

The problem right now was the current situation.

‘I can't believe I have to think about this right now.’

Big Smile wasn't in a good state right now.

From Heh-bibin's perspective, he couldn't ignore the money given by Apollo, but it wasn't enough to put his life on the line. The important element here was Apollo's father. He needed a closer tie to Apollo's father. His father wasn't that amazing, but he possessed enough wealth to easily drop a sponsor contract worth a million dollar.

Moreover, his father ran a company that was well-known within China. Truthfully, the name of the company was more important than the money. If they could get a sponsorship from that company, the guild would get recognition, and trust.

‘The Hahoe Mask.....’

If it was a reasonable request, he would have accepted the request.

If only the mark wasn't the Hahoe mask.

‘It'll be difficult.’

Currently, all the relevant people in the 30 great guilds knew about the Hahoe Mask. He was that hot right now. If he could make a cameo in a broadcast, one could easily get a million viewers. Of course, it was possible to get more than that. The 30 great guilds, and the rest of the guilds was trying hard to contact him.

If Apollo Guild took care of him by accepting the request of the Apollo guild, the Big Smile Guild wouldn't receive any good publicity. Big Smile already had a negative public impression, and they didn't need to pour gasoline on top of it.

Heh-bibin thought hard on it once again.

Then he gave his answer.

'I can't afford to move any of our forces to catch the Hahoe Mask.'

If he wanted to track down and kill the Hahoe mask, he would need a significant amount of manpower and effort to succeed. If he made it the business of the Big Smile guild, it would be child's play. However, that option wasn't possible. In the end, Heh-bibin had to move his personal troops and his personal guards, but they were woefully inadequate for this task. It was easy to kill him, but the finding the Hahoe Mask was the hard part.

Heh-bibin opened his mouth.

“I'm sorry. The guild is in a tough place right now. Moreover, I can't do anything unless I know the the exact location of the Hahoe Mask.”

Refusal.

- Please I beg of you. Big Smile doesn't have to put their name out there. If you can catch that bastard, I will pay you what the task is worth.

However, Apollo didn't stop. He kept up his entreaties. At his request, Heh-bibin eventually came to a compromise.

“Big Smile can't move to capture the Hahoe Masked. However, I can use various individuals to look for the Hahoe Mask. We'll talk

again once I find him.”

Even as he spoke, Heh-bibin thought there was a very low probability he'll be able to find the Hahoe-mask. If it was easy to meet the Hahoe Mask, the 30 great guild wouldn't have to go all over looking for him.

However, it didn't take him too long to change his mind.

3.

The high castle walls made one think about a modern building. It stretched out to the sides, and it was hard to see the end with the naked eye. Hyrkan's expression hardened when he saw the existence of the castle wall from afar.

‘This is the first time I'm visiting the Terube castle walls.’

The wall he was looking at was named Terube. It was located north of the Bangtz castle, which Hyrkan had visited earlier. It was like a Maginot line that blocked the group of monsters from moving towards the south.

On top of that, no one had broke ground above the castle walls. There was a Block Field formed over it.

This was why there was a lot of interest in this place. What was the method to break the Block Field? If the Block field was broken

and the monsters were killed, what was across this place?

‘If I remember correctly, the Frozen Kingdom is across this place?’

Of course, Hyrkan knew about it.

Across this castle wall, there was a frozen kingdom if one kept traveling that way. It was a stage set up for users over level 200. Hyrkan had nothing to do with that stage in the past.

‘The Stormhunter bastards took everything from the Frozen Kingdom.... Shit...’

When he thought about the memories regarding the Frozen Kingdom, he fought down the bitter smile that formed on his face. Hyrkan swallowed his bitter memory. He moved towards the keeper's office, one had to always visit, if one wanted to go across the castle walls.

The keeper's office already had a lot of visitors. Numerous users were gathered there. Of course, most of them were around level 80.

“Mmm?”

“Uh?”

The users recognized Hyrkan's style of clothes. They realized the presence of Hyrkan by his Shadow Dog leather set and the Hahoe Mask he wore.

“Is that the Hahoe Mask?”

“Really?”

“Wasn't the Hahoe Mask at the Parung Forest? Why would a person, who was at the Parung Forest, come north to the Terube castle walls? Doesn't it take a very long time to make the round trip?”

The atmosphere was becoming unsettled.

“Why else do you think he came here? He came to run the Battlefield.”

The unsettled atmosphere soon turned to nervousness. There was only one reason why a user would come here.

The Battlefield!

There was no other reasons. The only users capable of crossing the castle walls were those, who had received the Battlefield Pass. Normal users could do nothing here, and not even the merchants came to this place.

If Hyrkan was here, he was probably at this location for the same reason as them.

He came here to run the Battlefield, and it would start soon.

“A really incredible competitor has shown up.”

“Is he going to run it by himself?”

“He caught the Bear Warrior by himself, so it's quite possible he might solo the Battlefield.”

“Remember when he caught the Golden Skeleton? The Hahoe Mask will be a very formidable competitor.”

It basically meant an incredible competitor had appeared. This was the cause of their nervousness.

The users' expression changed. It was the expression made when looking at a rival. Their expression wasn't that great as they stared at the very difficult competitor. They frowned as their eyes narrowed. Some even expressed their displeasure.

Hyrkan put on a slight smile as he looked at their expressions.

‘This will be fun..’

Hyrkan used to feel such feelings of wariness directed at him everyday.

This level of wariness was laughable. When he was with the Stormhunters, he had gone head to head with the 30 great guilds. If he was someone, who would become afraid from seeing users of similar level put up their guard, he wouldn't have started a war in the first place.

Of course, not everyone was looking at Hyrkan that way. Several users greeted Hyrkan, who was famous in Warlord.

“Aren't you the Hahoe Mask?”

“Yes.”

“I've enjoyed looking at your videos.”

“Thank you.”

“Are you here to run the Battlefield?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think I can take a photo with you?”

“Of course.”

People stuck to Hyrkan to take a evidence photo. Not all people played this game by devoting their whole life to it. There were more users playing this game for fun than those who put their lives on the line. For these people, it was a fun experience where they were able to meet a famous player like Hyrkan.

However, there was a gaze looking at Hyrkan that fell into a third category.

‘Why is the guy Heh-bibin hyung-nim was talking about at this location?’

The user stealthily covered the round smiley face mark on his chest.

This man was in the third category unlike the people in the other two categories.

4.

Hyrkan was about to take his 5th evidence photo when a short man wearing large armor appeared.

“Attention!”

The armor looked burdensome on the man. The man was the captain keeper of the Terube castle walls. His name was Bagel.

He appeared as he spoke in a loud voice. The man continued to speak without taking the stock of the mood around him.

“I won't give you a long speech.”

The words he spat out was stiff, yet his voice was slight and beautiful. It was as if a sweet boy was trying to put on a serious front. Several female users had a queer smile on their face. It seemed Bagel was their type.

However, none of the users acted out of turn at Bagel's words. No one did' anything strange. Nothing good would come from antagonizing a NPC in Warlord. These users were over level 80, so they were well aware of this fact.

Bagel continued to speak without any difficulty.

“Each of the warriors here have been acknowledged by the Subjugation Association. At the same time, we recruited you here, so you can use your abilities to your heart's content. This is why I will open the castle gate for you guys.”

Everyone nodded their head, and Bagel continued his speech.

“The castle gates will open 144 hours later after it is opened once. During that time, all you have to do is fight. Kill the monsters. There is nothing else. The more you kill the more befitting the reward will be.”

Reward!

It was a sweet word, but none of the users reacted to that word. Instead, everyone waited for Bagel's next words.

‘I don't want to know that. Tell us the other part.’

‘Tell us the event.’

Everyone gathered here already knew about the reward. They wanted something else.

“Also, there is a monster tormenting the keepers of castle wall. The person, who's able to kill it, will receive a personal reward from me.”

It happened when Bagel spat out those words.

[Event Quest 'Blue Giant' is starting]

The new quest was starting.

The users finally let out a smile. Everyone had come here to receive this quest. They had come to the Battlefield for this reason.

“Each of you are responsible for your own lives.”

Bagel let those words linger, and he turned his back towards the group. The moment Bagle turned his back, everyone predictably looked at the watch on their left wrist.

Everyone reacted at the same time.

“Uh?”

“Huh!”

“Wa!”

Hyrkan also let out a yell.

“Wow.”

The reason for the reaction was...

‘The Quest Reward is a Unique Skill Book? Crazy!’

This battlefield had a jackpot item on the line.

Chapter 75. Battlefield (2)

5.

[Blue Giant]

- Quest Rank : Unique
- Quest Level Range : Over level 80, Equal or Below Level 100
- Quest Content : Defeat the mutated monster, Blue Giant, who has appeared on the Battlefield.
- Quest Reward : Unique Skill Book(Belongs only to acquired user)
- Miscellaneous : This Quest is an Event Quest. When the event ends, the Quest will disappear.

Unique Skill book.

Hyrkan couldn't get used to the content of the Quest, even though he kept looking over it again and again. He felt thankful

once again that his Hahoe Mask hid his expression.

‘Isn't this a bit over-powered?’

The Quest was quite powerful.

There was the stipulation that this Skill Book couldn't be traded. However, the fact that the Unique Skill Book couldn't be traded wasn't that important. The fact that it had come out was a big deal in itself.

Unique Skills couldn't easily be gained even if one had money. This meant possessing a Unique Skill allowed one to differentiate oneself from the others in the same class. Moreover, it meant a user would gain separation in an outstanding fashion. This game was all about competition, so the advantage of having an excellent differentiator was invaluable.

However, Warlord wasn't a game where it would allow anyone to easily gain this excellent differentiator.

That wasn't the case at all.

Until now the people, who earned a Unique Skill book as a Quest reward in Warlord, was either incredibly lucky or they put in enormous effort that made up for the lack of luck. Or one could use enough money to make up for the effort and luck.

If one wanted to earn it, there needed to be as much cost or luck

proportional to what was earned.

One thing was certain right now. Hyrkan didn't think this situation wasn't solely based on luck.

‘It means the difficulty must be set incredibly high.’

Hyrkan had never properly run a Battlefield, so his knowledge about the Battlefield was limited. However, he knew when a jackpot reward was on the line, then the difficulty was very high. It was an Event Quest with a reward that made one question if such a jackpot reward had really appeared. He was well aware that there was an equal amount of failure and success when such an Event Quest appeared.

‘Well, the difficulty level doesn't mean anything to me.’

No, the difficulty of the quest was probably the ancillary problem.

The reward was frightening.

This was natural.

‘Of course, everyone's face has changed.’

The competition would become frightening.

He looked through the eye holes of the Hahoe Mask. His eyes were barely visible behind the mask, and Hyrkan quickly looked around his surrounding. He looked at the expression of his competitors.

‘It seems everyone knows who the strong one is.’

The guarded feeling towards him couldn't be compared to before. It had become so large that it was almost visible to his eyes. Hyrkan was able to calm himself after seeing their expressions.

Hyrkan bit his lips hard. From their perspective, Hyrkan was the player that demanded the highest level of alertness. They wouldn't allow Hyrkan to do as he liked. If it was necessary, they would ally with each other to attack Hyrkan first.

‘The difficulty has suddenly increased.’

He didn't have any relationship with anyone here, so he wanted to enjoy the Battlefield a little bit. He'll record the footage he would sell, and he'll level up! He had approached this place with a light heart, but now he had to bet life and death on this event.

Of course, it didn't mean he wanted to give up.

‘Yes, I'll do it. Haven't I survived even messier situation than this? Ahn-jaehyun! Use your head. Analyze the situation. Find a way.’

The Unique Skill Book will help him in the future when he face enemies that couldn't even be compared to the ones right. Later, Hyrkan will have to compete with large and scary existences called the 30 great guild. The Unique Skill would be of great help when he went up against them. He had the chance to gain much here. If he ran away just because he was afraid of dying, then he would be better off exchanging all his items into cash. He would be better off using that money to go eat some beef.

‘All right.’

In the end this was a dog fight. Numerous people will hold hands with each other for profit, and attack him. They'll try to fuck over Hyrkan.

‘If they bother me, I'll take at least 30 of their watches.’

Hyrkan was at his best in this kind of fight.

[There is 59 minutes left until the castle gate is opened.]

At that moment, the time showed up on their wrist watch.

6.

- Hyung-nim. The Hahoe Mask is over here.

Big Smile guild's large membership base was the guild's weapon.

Since there were a lot of members, it was inevitable that cliques formed within the organization. Whenever a large number of people gathered, the number of factions would increase. This was a truth that wouldn't change even when people were at death's door.

If one wanted to survive in a competition against a rival faction, one needed to grow allies hidden from the public eyes.

This was also true for Heh-bibin. He had diverted a part of the guild's capacity for his own use, and before he knew it Heh-bibin was growing a promising prospects for his own faction. Cho-oohroong, who he had contacted, was someone he had put the most effort into developing amongst all the prospects under him.

There was some company in China, who wanted to get rich by creating a pro-gamer's club. They gathered prospects to train them, but when Warlord came out, it suppressed all the other games. The club folded, and Cho-oohroong became unemployed. This was when Heh-bibin had stepped in to feed Cho-oohroong.

Heh-bibin gave him enough respite, so he could game once again.

He was a prospect worth waiting for. If Heh-bibin did well in growing him, he had enough skills to one day become a key member of his force. It was a shame he hadn't been able to bring him to Warlord earlier. He was growing this prospect in secret, because he felt it was a waste to develop Cho-oohroong openly in the guild.

Cho-oohroong was such a person, and he had stepped onto the same stage as the Hahoe Mask by coincidence.

Heh-bibin was annoyed by Cho-oohroong's words instead of being surprised.

‘Fuck.’

He had wanted to just overlook this request, but now he wouldn't be able to.

“Are you sure it's the Hahoe Mask?”

- His Item Setting is the right one for the Hahoe Mask. Of course, this could be a copycat Hahoe Mask. However, he looks the part. Moreover, I've seen his vids several times. My intuition is telling me this is him.

Heh-bibin pulled up the information on where the Hahoe Mask had been seen last.

‘The bastard was at Parung Forest, so why did he come to the North Battlefield? How did he earn an admission ticket into the Battlefield? Is he perhaps doing the Subjugation Association's Quests, while doing the Main Scenario Quest?’

The Parung Forest was located at the easternmost part of the current Warlord. The Terube Castle Walls, where Cho-oohroong was at, was located at the northernmost part of the map.

Just moving from the forest to the walls would take several days. This was why most users, who were focused on leveling, would never do such a thing. It was more profitable to hunt during that time period. For a ranker, one's ranking changed depending on what you earned and lost in the span of several days. Of course, Hyrkan wasn't a ranker, but he was in a position where he had to level up quickly.

However, the important part was the fact that Hyrkan was there.

“When are you guys being inserted into the Battlefield?”

- We have 50 minutes left.

“Your identity?”

- There is no way I was discovered. You know that I don't work out in the open.

‘Hoo-oooh.’

After hearing his answer, Heh-bibin started tapping at the calculator inside his head.

There was a risk in getting rid of the Hahoe Mask. He was strong, famous and popular. He had more fans than haters.

‘The thing that bothers me is that he probably has someone behind his back.’

There was another reason. Hyrkan had a backer. It wasn't out in the public, but if one looked at his level up speed, hunting style, skills and the Items he possessed, one could tell he wasn't someone, who had no money. The result he achieved couldn't be attained with only his own skills.

It was impossible to get that kind of result without any help. No, even if it was possible, Heh-bibin wouldn't accept such an explanation.

To become the best in Warlord, one had to make an enormous amount of investment.

If one bothered the Hahoe Mask, it would inevitably irritate his backer.

‘There must be a good reason why he keeps his backer's identity a secret.’

However, one could extrapolate what would happen based on Hahoe Mask's previous pattern of movement. The backer wasn't someone who would move just because the Hahoe Mask was defeated once. The probability was low. If the threshold was that low, then the fact that he had been hiding himself until now was laughable.

‘If I keep thinking about it, it'll be endless.’

Heh-bibin froze the complicated thoughts that was filling his head.

Truthfully, his worries weren't based on evidence. It was a worry that was based on guesses. He couldn't guarantee the result of what would happen after this.

This was why he had to organize his thoughts.

He had to look at it simply. Should he take out the Hahoe Mask or not? He tried to make a list of the merit and risks involved in these two choices.

‘If I don't take him out, there is no risk. However, if Apollo found out the truth about my non-action, the relationship I have with Apollo will be severed.’

Apollo was a greedy and selfish bastard. Apollo would never let someone be if the person got on his nerve. Hahoe Mask hadn't

insulted the man, but he had insulted the guild he had created. This was why he was making a request to Big Smile, who was one of the 30 great guilds. It was purely for revenge. This showed how petty and vindictive he was.

Moreover, Apollo knew about Cho-oohroong. He knew Cho-oohroong focused leveling up through hunting on the Battlefield Stage. The Hahoe Mask will probably release his battle vid, and there was a high chance Apollo might see Cho-oohroong there. Information spread pretty quickly in this business.

Then Apollo would unconditionally leave Heh-bibin. He would leave Heh-bibin, and give that money to someone else to establish a new connection. Moreover, Apollo might try to screw over Heh-bibin if Apollo felt betrayed by him.

‘If I catch the Hahoe Mask, I can get a lot of benefit from Apollo. The problem is I’ll make the Hahoe Mask my enemy....’

There were merits to taking care of the Hahoe Mask. Apollo had a lot of connections.

However, as he said earlier, he would be making enemies of the Hahoe Mask and his backer.

The heart of the matter was determining if he could eliminate the risk.

‘There is a very small number of people, who know Cho-

oohroong is part of Big Smile, and not many know he is specifically under me. The world doesn't know. However, they'll find out once Cho-oohroong makes his debut... When we reach that point, no one would nitpick on what I did. Moreover, even if the Hahoe Mask had one of the 30 great guild as his backer, there was no reason why he would be pushed around. Of course, I'm assuming Big Smile was still one of the 30 great guild when that time arrived.'

Cho-oohroong wasn't part of Big Smile. At the very least, he wasn't officially part of their guild.

“Hmm.”

The choice was unexpectedly easy.

The only thing left was the method.

“Cho-oohroong.”

- Yes, hyung-nim.

“Do you think you can kill the Hahoe Mask?”

The answer was immediate.

- Do I just have to kill him?

The reply came back really fast.

He didn't have a single iota of hesitation.

‘Mmmm?’

Heh-bibin knew Cho-oohroong had supreme confidence in his skills, but he wasn't someone, who did anything beyond his capability.

- So I just have to make it so that the Hahoe Mask doesn't step into Warlord for the next 48 hrs?

It sounded as if something was up.

Heh-bibin answered with an expression of anticipation.

“If you can record a vid of the process, then I don't care what methods you use. No, it doesn't have to be a vid. You can also take a pic.

- It'll be possible. No. Actually, I might not need to step forward at all.

As expected, something was up.

“What are you talking about?”

- This Battle Field Quest's Reward is a Unique Skill book.

‘Ah!’

When he heard those words, Heh-bibin's thoughts did a complete 180. Heh-bibin delivered his last words.

“I'll contact you after 20 minutes. You get ready.”

- Yes.

After ending the call, Heh-bibin immediately attempted to call Apollo. The phone call connected immediately. As if Apollo had been waiting for Heh-bibin to contact him, it took him mere seconds to pick up the phone.

Heh-bibin asked a direct question to Apollo.

“I just have to kill the Hahoe Mask?”

- Yes. You just need to kill him. I don't care who does the deed.

“Tell me the scenario.”

7.

On the battlefield, no one knew who would become their enemy or ally. Everyone firmed their resolve, and they looked towards the closed castle gate.

Bagel appeared once again in front of them.

He still wore his armor. Instead of a feeling of gravitas, he still gave off a feeling of cuteness. Several female users stared at Bagel, and they fanned their face with their hand. They were most definitely recording a vid of Bagel.

When Hyrkan saw this, he had a sullen expression on his face for a brief moment.

‘Now that I think about it I've never seen a stacked and beautiful NPC, since the start of the game. Why do I always meet tanned dudes? Is there a shortage of pretty NPC in this game? Do I have to go the Fairy's Forest?’

Suddenly, he felt his progress of his gameplay inside Warlord was very dry.

Of course, it was a very trivial matter, and the thought was wiped away by Bagel's words.

“Open the gate!”

Bagel's loud and energetic voice rang out. The single gate that existed between the walls started to move slowly.

Ggi-ri-ri, ggi-ri-ri, ggi-ri-reek!

The mechanisms sounded like a stiff body complaining as it limbered up. The sound gave off a sound of desolation. The loud sound gave goosebumps to the users. The door that descended into the floor didn't look like a door. It looked like a piece of the castle wall that was shaped like a big door.

Everyone was silent at the sight in front of them.

Were they admiring the view?

No.

They were overwhelmed.

This was an amazing sight. It was a ridiculous sight that can only be seen in virtual reality through the game machine. At times, the view made one hold one's breath.

It was the same for Hyrkan. He had seen numerous sights such as this, so it wasn't as if he couldn't breathe from being overwhelmed. However, it didn't mean he wasn't amazed by it.

‘This is why Warlord is fun and scary at the same time.’

Anything was possible in this world. It was a scary place, where the virtual reality sometimes seemed more real than the real world.

The world of Warlord was a stage Hyrkan decided to live in.

The door finally descended all the way. There were 8 parties behind Bagel. It meant there were 53 users.

“You've accepted that you might die here, so I won't say come back alive. Die at your appointed time, but kill as many monsters as you can. Also, I'll give you a last warning. Even if you return to the castle gate for the purpose of survival, the castle gate will not open unless 144 hours has pass.....”

It happened before the word came to an end.

Hweek!

Hyrkan quickly put on his hood. With the darkness covering his face, he was the very first one out the castle gate.

“Uh?”

“Huhk!”

Several people unconsciously flinched when they saw this. They weren't surprised from the simple fact that Hyrkan had moved. They were like hunters that flinched when they witnessed their quarry suddenly move.

“.....ed.”

After they flinched, Bagel finished his words. Bagel quickly turned to see Hyrkan run past him.

Hyrkan was very fast. He was already disappearing into the forest located beyond the walls.

Hyrkan was the first one to throw the dice.

8.

When Hyrkan ran forward, Cho-oohroong had a brief thought.

‘Oh no.’

He felt his plan going awry.

‘This is going off script.’

He had to kill Hyrkan.

To do this, he had come up with a plan. It wasn't difficult. Cho-oohroong approached the users, who were wary of Hyrkan, and he had floated a deal to them.

They'll eliminate Hyrkan first, then they can hunt peacefully afterwards. When the Event Monster, the Blue Giant, shows up, the competition would start anew!

When numerous factions were in competition, it was basic tactics to ally oneself with some of the groups to eliminate the competition. No one had turned down Cho-oohroong's suggestion.

There were 7 parties excluding Hyrkan. Including the party Cho-oohroong was in, 5 groups had agreed to the suggestion. Even someone of the players, who took photos with Hyrkan, was included in the group.

This was this, and that was that..... This was the proof that the Hahoe Mask's reputation, the distinct way he handled himself, and his skills didn't always attract admiration and applause.

‘I thought this would be easy.....’

He thought the game was already over. Hyrkan would have had to face 5 groups. There were a total of 38 users. Since the surrounding was crawling with monsters, he thought Hyrkan

wouldn't have any place to run, and no one would help him.

However, Hyrkan had moved immediately.

Hyrkan's actions were unexpected. Those who agreed to catch Hyrkan together started to look at each other.

It was so sudden that there was confusion. Cho-oohroong was the one to organize everyone amidst the confusion.

‘If he's going to hunt, he'll leave a trace. He still have 144 hours left. We could also catch him at the end.’

Cho-oohroong looked at the users, who had formed a community with him.

Cho-oohroong used the voice-talk program to inform them of the change in plan. They nodded their heads instead of answering back. Then they looked at the users, who hadn't agreed to work with them.

“Why is the Hahoe Mask moving so fast?”

“Should we hurry up our pace?”

“Let's take this slowly. We have to catch monsters first. The most important thing is to protect one's body.”

At that moment, they had decided to eliminate anyone, who hadn't joined their community. They would do this before they eliminate Hyrkan.

Chapter 76. Battlefield (3)

9.

When one went across the castle walls, the first thing one saw was the bones of unknown remains. One could see some human bones, but it was mostly littered with large monster bones. It was basically a wasteland with all kinds of bones decorating the land.

It was basically a field of bones. Across the plains, there was a forest with large trees. The horizon was visible above the large forest, and the forest was more terrifying than the field of bones. The forest shook intermittently, and at times...

Kooh-oh-oh-oh-oh!

A roar rang out.

The forest itself was a monster's nest. Those who invaded the body of the forest could feel it with their five senses.

“So this is what a Battlefield is like.”

“It looks harder than I thought it would be.”

This was the first time the Tinkerbelle Party was running the Battlefield. The stage that opened up beyond the castle was much more than they expected.

Of course, they had a hard time immediately adjusting to the stage. When the castle door opened, they were the last one to reach the forest. Even after reaching the forest, they were filled with nervousness. The nervousness filling them ate away at their composure.

They started walking into the forest, when they were immediately thrown into battle.

“Ah! You guys?”

The people they had faced only a couple dozen minutes ago showed up as enemies.

“W...what?”

“What do you mean what? This is a hazing ritual for you rookies.”

It wasn't just one party. Five parties appeared, and they surrounded the Tinkerbell Party. They didn't even hold a conversation. There wasn't time to exchange curses and excuses. The battle ended before it started.

‘Look at what these bastards are doing.’

Hyrkan had his hood on, and he was doing his best to crouch on top of the tree branch. He saw the sight of the Tinkerbell Party perishing from start to finish.

‘When they became surprised when I stormed out of the door, I knew something was amiss... The 5 parties are working together?’

It was a common sight to see a party like the Tinkerbell party suffer in the Battlefield. Normally, the parties fought with each other, but the bloodshed were clustered in the beginning or the latter half of the Battlefield. It was very important to eliminate the competition either before the main monster hunt or before one takes on the Event Monster. The middle part is mostly focused on hunting monsters, so there was an implicit understanding to not attack each other. In the end, one of the reasons why users come to the Battlefield was the overabundance monsters. They were here to level up at a much faster rate.

This time it was clear why the Tinkerbell Party was targeted. At a glance, one could tell they were new to the Battlefield. The experienced users didn't pause to see the Battlefield stage in surprise. They immediately moved into the Battlefield, and they looked for a place to hide in the surrounding. Basically, anyone who stayed in the entrance was asking to be targeted in the beginning. The Tinkerbell Party didn't just paint a target on themselves. They were basically begging others to kill them!

However, Hyrkan never expected 5 parties with over 30 members to rush forward.

‘Five..... If my memory is correct, the 5 parties have a total member of 20, 28... Is it 38 people?’

The 5 parties were working together.

He knew why they joined hands with each other.

‘They are really determined to catch me.’

Their target was himself. It was Hyrkan.

The quality of users participating in the Battlefield was about the same. The level limit made it so. If there weren't any level limit, the high level users would come here to wreak havoc. Many felt an irrational feeling of unfairness when Hyrkan appeared on this stage.

The 5 parties didn't hesitate to make an alliance.

‘Also, didn't those bastards act all friendly when they wanted to take photos with me? Assholes.’

From Hyrkan's perspective, nothing about this situation made him happy.

‘Still, this is a bit weird.’

At the same time, he harbored a suspicion.

‘No matter how I see it, they are going all-in on catching me. Wasn't this a little bit excessive even for a Unique Skill?’

He somewhat understood what was going on, but he did feel their actions were a bit excessive.

Hyrkan narrowed his eyes.

‘Did I steal a watch from one of them in the past?’

Of course, there was practical or economical reasons. However, there could also be personal reasons mixed in there.

Revenge!

It was a very emotional and unproductive reason, but it was also a motivation that made people move.

If he was being truthful, Hyrkan's gaming history wasn't squeaky clean. He had ruthlessly killed anyone, who bothered him. The fault was with his opponent, but they weren't the kind of people, who would admit to that in the first place. They wouldn't have fought if that was the case in the first place. If this was about revenge, this outcome wasn't too strange.

‘Is it perhaps those bitches I screwed over before? Was one of their white knights in that group? Probably not. Did those guys somehow find out I'm the Hahoe Mask? Is it the friend of that guy I screwed over when I caught the Golden Skeleton?’

Any ways, there were a lot of people dying to catch Hyrkan. There were too many that Hyrkan couldn't pinpoint the source.

Of course, Hyrkan didn't have to think long on it.

‘Well, whatever. The 5 parties of 38 people is my target.’

Hyrkan watched as he saw the 5 parties take the Tinkerbell party members' watches. He stopped his trivial thoughts, and he started making his plans in earnest.

‘If I follow my heart, I would want to record footage for the entire 144 hours. I want them to feel as if they were the supporting characters of a live Saw movie. However, that'll waste my hunting time, so I'll finish them within 24 hours.’

He made his plan in a flash.

This was all routine for Hyrkan.

11.

“What a really fucked up situation.”

It hadn't even been two hours since the Terube castle wall's gate had opened. Before they could even properly start their monster hunt, the Mongmart Party was surrounded by other users.

Mongmart Party's Tanker Board was angry when he saw the several dozen users surrounding them. He yelled with an incredulous expression on his face.

“Even if this is the Battlefield, aren't you guys taking this too far? What's the meaning of coming at us with an alliance of 5 parties?”

His shout was filled with anger. As if they agreed with Board's anger, the two priests, 3 magicians, and swordsman of the Mongmart Party also had expressions filled with anger.

On the other hand, the 30+ people didn't have any expressions on their face. They were calm and it seemed they weren't going to respond to the Mongmart Party.

“You've run the Battlefield numerous times. You should have known you might run into a situation like this.”

“Let's end this quickly.”

These were users, who were used to such tactics. This was why they participated in the Battlefield. This didn't happen all the time in the Battlefield, but it was something that could break out at any time. If one felt embarrassment, shame, sorrow, or guilt then they didn't belong on the stage called the Battlefield.

“Even if there is no rules in the Battlefield, isn't this too much?!”

Since they were the ones holding the short end of the stick, they could only curse. They could probably swear for 24hrs straight in this situation.

With a proper battle about to happen, Cho-oohroong looked on in silence as the parties exchanged words. Then he discreetly gripped his sword.

‘There is no need to drag this out.’

The Mongmart Party wasn't their main target.

‘If Hahoe Mask notices something is amiss, he might go into hiding. That would put me in a tough spot.’

The main target was the Hahoe mask. He had to take care of this situation before the Hahoe Mask realizes what was going on.

If Hyrkan realizes the groups had allied with each other to catch him, he would act according to the situation.

He wouldn't fight upfront. He'll most definitely be on the run, and he'll try to take advantage of opportunistic moments. It wasn't easy to chase after a single fleeing user in the Battlefield.

Moreover, there was an additional reason why he had to catch the Hahoe Mask.

‘I have to catch that bastard..’

Once he catches the Hahoe Mask, he'll immediately receive a reward of a million Yuan. This was the bonus pot put on the line for the Hahoe Mask hunt by Apollo.

‘Million Yuan.....’

For killing one user, he would easily earn more than \$100,000 here. Cho-oohroong was already planning out what he would do with that money.

Anyways, if he wanted to quickly settle this situation, he had to do the dirty work.

Even if over 30 users surrounded them, their opponents were veterans of the Battlefield. Their levels and Item Settings were similar all similar.

The result was obvious if one considered the numerical

advantage. However, the situation could always change. Basically, there was a high chance that some casualties would occur if the Monmark Party struggled against them in their death. No one wanted to become the casualty.

This was why someone had to take the bullet. Someone had to lead this battle if one wanted a quick resolution.

This was why Cho-oohroong moved. When he moved, the users of the Swordsman Class moved slowly as they took on the role of Tankers and Strikers.

The magicians started to cast magic from behind them. The priests readied themselves in the backline, and they focused on the upcoming battle.

It happened when everyone's attention was focused on a single location.

“Huh!”

The perimeter was tightening when someone breathing their last breath was heard.

‘What is it?’

Cho-oohroong was looking at his targets, when he heard a sound from beyond the Mongmart party.

Cho-oohroong's gaze moved quickly.

‘Huh?’

Cho-oohroong's eyes picked up the Skeleton Warriors. There were 3 of them. The three Skeleton Warriors ran towards a priest, and they stabbed the priest. The Skeleton Warriors withdrew their sword, then they stabbed once again.

“Ooh-ahk. Shit!”

The priest let out a yell, and he alerted the others of his emergency situation. However, by that time, the three Skeleton Warriors had already stabbed the priest's body a dozen times.

The priest's defensive gear wasn't that great. The defensive gear was dependent on one's level, so the priest's body was basically pudding. Moreover, the attack power of the Skeleton Warriors was on a frightening level.

Before the priest could cast his healing spells, he was turned into a mess.

“Shit. What's going on over there?”

One of the priest's companion saw him go down, so he turned to run towards the Skeleton Warriors. He ignored the Mongmart

Party. At that moment, everyone was filled with thoughts of saving the priest!

‘We'll be in a dangerous situation if the priest goes down.’

Cho-oohroong thought along the same line. A priest was of great importance to a party. Priests were more important in the Battlefield than the mages. If one didn't have a priest, it was better to logout and wait for the door to open.

As befitting the status of Heh-bibin's rising star, he started thinking about what would be coming next.

‘Wait a moment.’

The Skeleton Warriors wouldn't just show up by themselves.

Cho-oohroong turned his head.

‘Ah!’

Four Skeleton Warriors suddenly appeared from a different direction. Everyone watched in surprise as the group of Skeleton Warriors jumped another priest.

Cho-oohroong's thoughts naturally moved onto the next thought.

‘Where's the Hahoe Mask?’

Since the Skeleton Warriors were here, there was no way the Hahoe Mask was not here.

As Cho-oohroong expected, the Hahoe Mask appeared.

“Ooh-ah!”

From behind Cho-oohrong, he stabbed a priest affiliated with Cho-oohroong's party. Hyrkan immediately withdrew his sword, and he struck the priest's neck. Afterwards, he sawed at the priest's neck. In a flash, the priest's neck was half-severed.

Hyrkan had appeared in this fashion, and he made sure the priest was dead.

“Charge!”

When Hyrkan appeared, the Mongmart party moved as if they had been waiting for this.

No, he was sure they had been waiting for Hyrkan. The Mongmart party moved towards the opposite direction from where Hyrkan had appeared.

They were splitting up their troops.

If one wanted to catch two rabbits, they would inevitably have to divide their group into two.

The problem was the group surrounding the Mongmart party. There wasn't a normal power structure between these parties. One needed to go through the process of suggestion and negotiation when dealing with them.

One had to consider the situation, assess what method one had to use, suggest the method, and the group had to agree with said method. It was a frustrating process, and it wasn't something that could be done in a desperate situation where 1 second could mean the difference between life or death.

‘Fuck!’

Even Cho-oohroong was taken aback as Hyrkan used his blade on his party's priest. The way Hyrkan killed the priest was close to torture, and Cho-oohroong could only look on.

After killing a priest in a flash, Hyrkan's eyes met Cho-oohroong's gaze.

It lasted only for a brief moment.

Hyrkan immediately turned his head around, and he started running towards a different user.

“He.....”

He was also a Priest.

Poohk!

The Priest was about to yell out for help, but Hyrkan stabbed his sword between his eyes. Hyrkan didn't stop running as he carried off the Priest on his shoulder.

He was running away.

“Follow him!”

“Uh?”

“It's the Hahoe Mask!”

At that moment, a group of users followed after Hyrkan. How could they do nothing when the target was running away?

At that sight, Cho-oohroong swallowed his saliva. Cho-oohroong was at a loss for words.

‘H...he got us.’

Cho-oohroong was struck dumb, and he couldn't say anything.

12.

Pook pook!

With the priest on his shoulder, Hyrkan ran as he repeatedly skewered the body of the priest like a shish kabob. Until a moment ago, the priest had shouted all kinds of curses at him, but now his body was slumped over like a corpse. Hyrkan laughed when he saw this.

‘He forcefully logged out.’

The user had been slung across Hyrkan's shoulder like a luggage, and he stabbed as he retreated. It seemed it wasn't fun to experience it live.

Finally, Hyrkan turned to look for the first time at the 3 people chasing him.

‘They are following me like dogs.’

The three of them had successfully chased after Hyrkan. This meant these users had Stat that was comparable to Hyrkan.

They were Strikers.

They were users of the Swordsman Class, who mainly focused on their Strength Stat.

Hyrkan had slowed down just enough, so they had an easier time following him. Then he allowed them to incrementally close the distance.

In the end, he had stopped.

‘Is it here?’

After stopping, he discreetly turned his head to look around his surrounding then he dropped the priest from his shoulder.

Chul-puh-duhk!

He wasn't dead yet, but the user had given up on this character. The priest's body was basically a corpse.

Poohk!

Hyrkan planted his sword into the priest's spine. He placed two hands on the sword, and he looked at the three Strikers.

The sight of Hyrkan was intimidating and frightening.

“S...stop.”

“Hoooo!”

Even the veteran users couldn't attack Hyrkan immediately. The imposing feeling coming off of Hyrkan had made them come to a stop.

The three users, who had stopped after feeling the imposing feeling, came to their senses, and they ordered their thoughts.

‘Ah, shit.’

‘We're the only ones here.....’

Their battle capability was most definitely outstanding. They were of the Swordsman Class, and they had focused on raising their Strength Stat. No one would choose to grow this Class if it was weak.

However, the opponent was the Hahoe Mask.

‘Can the three of us take down the Hahoe Mask?’

‘He doesn't have his Skeletons?’

He controlled 10 powerful Skeleton Warriors. He was strong

enough to solo Boss Monsters with them. He was someone, who possessed a ridiculous amount of skill. Will three Swordsman be enough to take him down?

It was possible.

However, it wouldn't be easy.

‘Should we just run away?’

‘We don't have priests any more. What should we do?’

Everyone was filled with nervousness as they raised their weapons. Those with shields raised it in front on them.

Hyrkan wordlessly looked back at them.

Pook pook!

He took out the sword stuck in the priest's back, and he kept repeatedly stabbing the body. It seemed he wanted to be sure that the priest was dead.

‘Crazy son of a bitch!’

The sight was so frightening that the three of them couldn't even come up with a way to buy time or try something else.

It was at that moment.

Koo-uhhhhh!

Accompanying a terrifying roar, four monsters ran towards them. They were horned Trolls with gray skin. The three Strikers could only look at the four Trolls with a dumbfounded expression on their face. Hyrkan put a big smile.

‘That Golem is slow, but its timing is pretty killer.’

Hyrkan had unsummoned his Golem, and the monsters had come to kill the Golem's master. Hyrkan had readied a monster bomb.

13.

“How many of you are left?”

“Six.”

“Nine.”

“We.....”

They had started out with 38 users, but the number had been reduced to 30.

In a flash, 8 users suffered a Game Over.

Of course, it wasn't as if they hadn't gained anything. As the Mongmart Party was running away, they were able to eliminate 3 of their users.

However, their current situation was embarrassingly bad even if one added in their gains.

The biggest problem was...

‘We lost 4 Priests.....’

Eight users had suffered Game Over, and half that number was priests. Amongst the the 5 party, there had been a total of 8 priests, and now four of them were gone.

‘We've be perfectly undone.’

It was a frightening situation.

Even though this was only a game, Cho-oohroong felt a chill run down his back.

Currently, the community was formed with 5 parties, yet they had lost 4 priests. If the community dissolves, one party would be without a priest. Basically, it was a death sentence.

‘I never expected the Mongmart to join hands with the Hahoe Mask.’

They were in a critical situation only because Mongmart Party had joined hands with the Hahoe Mask. That was the only reason.

When they surrounded the Mongmart Party, they pulled the priests to the back to protect them. It was par for the course. The Strikers and Tankers were sent towards the front line to start the engagement. Since they had surrounded their enemies, this was the most logical and suitable tactic.

However, no one expected the Hahoe Mask to appear then and there

To make it worse, the Hahoe Mask divided his Skeleton Troops into two groups, and he killed two priests in a single strike. Afterwards, Hyrkan quickly killed one priest himself, then he ran away with another priest on his shoulder.

‘The Hahoe Mask has never run the Battlefield before, so how is he able to come up with these tactics?’

It was a very smart play. Instead of killing the priest on the spot,

he carried the priest, who had no battle ability. He killed the priest as he carried him around. He was crafty. Hyrkan had a craftiness that only beasts could come up with.

This was how Hyrkan killed four priests by himself. The 5 parties had combined forces, yet he was skilled enough to pick off the 4 priests. His skill gave Cho-oohroong goosebumps. Furthermore, he had intentionally baited the Strikers, and he used the monsters to turn the Strikers into road kills. Even though he was on the losing end of it, he almost let out a sound of admiration.

This clarified something. Hyrkan had perfectly read the intent of Cho-oohroong and the others.

This basically meant....

‘This isn't the end.’

It basically meant this was the beginning.

Cho-oohroong and the other parties were the first ones to proceed with no rules governing their actions. If their opponents didn't follow the rules, they didn't have the grounds to complain.

One had to be ready to battle with monster at any time especially in the Battlefield. The Battlefield had so many monsters that the monsters came looking for the users. On such a stage, it was impossible for 4 priests to cover over 20 users.

The worst part was the rest time. It was impossible to game for the whole day. In several hours, everyone was going to logout to rest. Several people were saying they weren't going to log back until the 144 hours was up. Instead of being blindly hit with Game Over, some thought it would be better to take a 144 hours break. They would avoid the Game Over, while they take a week worth of break.

This meant their numbers would shrink once again.

Eventually, they wouldn't have a numerical advantage.

‘I can't let that happen.’

Cho-oohroong felt the need to organize this situation. He gathered the leaders of the other parties.

“We have to continue to work together. If we go our separate ways, we'll just become targets.”

“You want us to hunt together in this state?”

“If we stay together, at the very least, the enemies won't attack us directly. We still have a decisive numerical advantage. Don't we need to put our survival as our highest priority?”

There wasn't any pushback.

‘Shit.’

However, when Cho-oohroong looked at their expression, he could sense they weren't happy with him.

‘They are trying to put the blame on me.’

In the end, Cho-oohroong was the first one to suggest the attack on the Hahoe Mask. It was human nature to blame someone else when things don't go your way.

“Well, let's do that then.”

They gave their assent, but they weren't explicit with their answers.

Cho-oohroong realized something was amiss.

Hyrkan appeared in front of them once again about 5 hours after the castle gates had opened. Everyone was getting ready to logout, so they were looking for a safe zone when it happened.

“Who's the mastermind behind all of this?”

Chapter 77. Golem Upgrade (1)

1.

“Who's the one behind all of this?”

Hyrkan recited his words with the Mongmart Party behind his back. It was a terrifying sight. The Hahoe Mask made the other users recall the face of the Skeleton Warrior's face. He didn't feel like a normal living person.

Several people even stopped breathing. Since they were holding their breathe, it wasn't easy to talk.

Everyone stared at Hyrkan without saying anything. Those who caught Hyrkan's eyes quickly averted their head.

When there was no answers forthcoming, Hyrkan opened his mouth once again.

“Let's not drag this out. You guys were definitely trying to catch me. There should be a main culprit, who suggested this plan.”

As he spoke, Hyrkan stared at a single person.

The person, who met Hyrkan's gaze, frowned. Of course, this person didn't like the fact that he was under suspicion. When the user met Hyrkan's gaze, Hyrkan furrowed his brows, and he spoke

in a sure manner. He spoke with a loud voice.

“Are you the mastermind? Have you perhaps met me in the past? Did you experience me severing your wrist?”

“It's not me.”

The user answered immediately.

Hyrkan asked the question once again.

“Then who is it?”

At that moment...

“Do we have an obligation to answer your questions? It isn't as if we did anything wrong. This is the Battlefield. The Battlefield.”

A user didn't like Hyrkan's domineering attitude, so he spoke in a combative manner. Hyrkan's gaze naturally landed on the person, who spoke towards him.

As if the user didn't want to be overwhelmed by Hyrkan's spirit, he spoke in a much more forceful manner.

“If you don't like it, then let's fight! Even if you prattle on, there aren't anyone here, who would listen to you. If we planned on

talking to you, we wouldn't have attacked you in the first place.”

It was a provocation.

Let's fight!

In a sense, this was a reasonable response. Hyrkan's side was still at a numerical disadvantage. Hyrkan could summon his Skeleton Warriors, and there was the Mongmart Party. Overall, there were less than 20 of them.

Moreover, the 5 parties formed to catch Hyrkan still had more priests than Hyrkan's group.

It wasn't as if they hadn't done anything wrong, but they had enough ammunition to come up with an excuse. It was the excuse that trumped all excuses. This was the Battlefield.

In this situation, they didn't have to act like sinners in front of Hyrkan.

That was the truth.

“This is the Battlefield.....”

Hyrkan was well aware of this fact. He had shown himself, since he was aware of this fact.

“I'm saying this, because this is the Battlefield.”

Hyrkan's words silenced them for a moment, and they looked around their surrounding.

‘What is it?’

‘He said those words, because we are in the Battlefield? What is the meaning behind his words?’

There were almost no one in the 5 party alliance, who thought they would lose, if they went head to head with Hyrkan and the Mongmart Party. At the same time, no one here wanted to have a group fight in the first place.

It would be prudent to hear out Hyrkan first.

“I want to know if there is a mastermind behind this plot. Was this done, because a person had a grudge against me? If so, I would like to settle my account. The Event Monster hasn't come out yet, and I don't want to waste my time doing PK especially when it doesn't give me any EXP. Shouldn't it be the same for you guys?”

‘Of course, these bastards came here to hunt. Everyone here knows the importance of time.’

This was Hyrkan's plan.

Truthfully, Hyrkan was angry at those, who allied with each other to take him down. If he wanted to cut off all their wrists, he would be able to do it. Moreover, he had eliminated half their priests earlier on, so it wouldn't be too hard to kill them through attrition.

The problem was there was nothing to be gained by Hyrkan if he did that. He'll be able to take their watches, but it wasn't as if the watches always gave jackpot items.

There was a possibility Hyrkan might not be able to hunt at a decent pace in the 144 hours period. The loss he would take by spending most of the time PKing would be massive. He had been lucky enough to be able to gain entrance to the ultimate hunting ground. These users wouldn't give him any EXP, and he didn't want to waste most of his time fighting them.

The decisive factor was the Unique Skill Book that was up for grabs as reward. From Hyrkan's perspective, it would be more advantageous for him to walk the easier road. Nothing good would come from making this any more difficult than it had to be.

Hyrkan wasn't the only one, who was thinking along the same line.

A lot of them had accepted the offer to kill Hyrkan, because they wanted to boast on the SNS afterwards. However, their hearts were quite shaken right now.

‘Is he trying to call a truce?’

‘Yes. We'll be fighting each other anyways once the Blue Giant shows up. What's the point of fighting right now?’

‘Since it turned out like this, let's give up on the Event Monster. Let's just focus on leveling up. It would be much better than dying.’

Everyone was convinced.

Still, no one immediately agreed with Hyrkan. It wasn't as if there wasn't a mastermind behind this plan.

Cho-oohroong was the mastermind, and that truth wouldn't change.

All the users here wasn't able to point at Cho-oohroong to put all the blame on him. He would become the twisted hero, and it would have the side effect of deflecting the blame onto them. Anyways, Cho-oohroong had merely made the offer. They had made their own choices, so everyone here was culpable.

‘This is a mess.’

Of course, this was the worst case scenario for Cho-oohroong. Now Cho-oohroong would have to talk to Hyrkan. Then he would have to explain his reasons.

Of course, he didn't have to tell the truth. Cho-oohroong had no reasons to reveal his identity. He must not. If this incident was connected to Big Smile, then the situation would turn from a mess to the worst possible situation.

‘I have no choice.’

Cho-oohroong quickly finished his calculations.

‘Let's end this cleanly.’

Instead of backing slowly towards the edge of a cliff, he would rather jump off at his own volition. He would take care of what comes next afterwards. This was the best method.

Cho-oohroong yelled out.

“I'm the mastermind.”

At those words, Hyrkan turned to look at Cho-oohroong. Hyrkan slightly tilted his head in puzzlement.

‘Huh? It feels like I've seen him somewhere?’

It wasn't a familiar face, yet he had seen that face somewhere. It wasn't as if Cho-oohroong had a common appearance. He had a strong jaw, and he had thick facial features. Even his eyebrows were thick. He had a face that would leave a lasting impression on

someone. If Hyrkan felt like he had seen this man somewhere, then the possibility was high.

‘I guess it really was someone with a personal grudge against me?’

Hyrkan didn't suppress his growing curiosity.

“Do you have some grudge against me?”

“No way. This is the first time I've seen you.”

“Your reasons?”

“You are strong. If we hadn't joined up, we had no chance of taking you down. I didn't want to see a competitor flourish in front of me.”

It was a ridiculous reason, but Hyrkan had heard this line of reasoning quite often.

Hyrkan nodded his head. He could accept that reasoning.

“Since I started this, at the very least, I'll finish it. I request a 1on1 match.”

Before his words could finish, Cho-oohroong got into his fighting

stance. He pointed his sword towards Hyrkan.

It caused a commotion in the surrounding.

‘Incredible.’

‘He wants a 1on1 match with the Hahoe Mask.’

No one here expected Cho-oohroong to suggest a 1on1 match. It was most definitely an unexpected turn of event. In some ways, it was also a sight that was quite heroic. In the end, he had stepped forward to take responsibility for his own action. It was an act that deserved applause instead of a pointing finger.

Moreover, this would be Cho-oohroong's last gambit at a winning move.

‘Since I will never be able to have a good relationship with the Hahoe Mask, it would be best to cleanly settle my account with him.’

He wasn't confident he could win against Hyrkan. Hyrkan was a monster. If he wanted to take down Hyrkan in a 1on1 battle, he would at the very least need to have advanced in his Class. However, it wasn't as if the chance of his victory was 0%.

Cho-oohroong wasn't weak. There wasn't that many in his level that could win against him.

‘I’ll win. I’ll use any method for this win.’

If he won, it would be a big deal. Cho-oohroong would eat all of the accolade that was associated with the Hahoe Mask. In a single battle, his name would be spread across the entirety of Warlord. He would be known as a Super Rookie. Moreover, he would receive great reward from both Heh-bibin and Apollo.

The potential gain made it worth gambling his life, which was worth 48 hrs of playing time. This one time gamble wasn't such a bad thing.

Hyrkan looked at Cho-oohroon, and he took out a single Skeleton Fragment from his pocket. Then he threw it in front of Cho-oohroong. The Skeleton Warrior immediately formed, and it stood between Hyrkan and Cho-oohroong.

He didn't speak.

He didn't make any gestures.

However, everyone could see Hyrkan had accepted Cho-oohroong's request.

Cho-oohroong got into his stance.

‘All right. I’ll get rid of the Skeleton first.’

Hyrkan's Skeleton Warriors were nothing like the normal Skeleton Warriors. Everyone, who was knowledgeable about Hyrkan, knew this. This was why people were very curious as to how Hyrkan fostered his Skeleton Warriors. Numerous guilds and wealthy individuals had already made public requests towards Hyrkan. They wanted him to sell them his method of fostering these Skeleton Warriors.

It dodged quite well. The Skeleton Warrior was able to dodge normal blows quite easily. It fought better than an average user. If one attacked thoughtlessly, the Skeleton Warrior would find the user's opening. It would allow the Skeleton Warrior to counter-attack.

This was why sometimes the Skeleton Warriors acted as if they were weak.

‘When fighting against a counter type, the answer is to use the counter attack against them.’

Hyrkan's Skeleton Warriors were adept at dodging the enemy's attack, and counter-attacking afterwards.

On the other hand, if one didn't attack first, and fight a defensive battle, the Skeleton Warriors wouldn't be able to show their impressive battle capability. They were strong, but at the same time, they were simple.

Even if they were simple, it was still hard to overcome them. The

Skeleton Warrior's biggest weakness was its defense. The Skeleton Warriors without Bone Armor would take considerable damage even without hitting it with a Skill attack. Its constitution was that weak.

From Cho-oohroong's perspective, he had no reason to attack in haste. Moreover, this was a very important battle. Instead of overextending himself, it was important for him to keep a level headed mind.

Cho-oohroong was on his guard as he looked for an opening to attack the Skeleton Warrior. Cho-oohroong was waiting for the Skeleton Warrior to attack him first.

‘Come. After I cut you up, I’ll immediately charge the Hahoe Mask to close the distance between me and him.’

Hyrkan smirked as he looked at Cho-oohroong.

Hyrkan let out a laugh as he took a fistful of Skeleton Fragments out of his pocket. He threw it over Cho-oohroong's head, and the fragments landed behind Cho-oohroong's back.

‘Uh?’

Cho-oohroong's gaze unconsciously followed the Skeleton Fragments. He saw the Skeleton Fragments land on the floor.

“Fuck!”

Cho-oohroong unconsciously let out a curse as he turned his body. It wasn't just one Skeleton Warrior. Around ten Skeleton Warriors showed up behind his back. He would have to face them first. No, he didn't have the time to think about this. His body moved before he could think.

When Cho-oohroong turned around, he had basically left his unguarded back towards Hyrkan.

Hyrkan wouldn't miss this opportunity. He would capitalize on it.

‘You are dead.’

Hyrkan immediately threw the Bone Explosives on his waist towards Cho-oohroong. He had thrown 5 Bone Explosives towards Cho-oohroong's feet. Each of them were worth 50 gold.

Kwahng!

It exploded immediately.

“Ooh-ahk!”

The force of the explosions was quite significant, and it sent shock wave into the surrounding.

The users near Cho-oohroong reflexively turned their head to the side or they raised their arm to their face. They tried to avoid or block the shockwave.

During all of this, Hyrkan threw his body between the explosions. Hyrkan's eyes saw through the dust and smoke caused by the explosion, and he found Cho-oohroong. Hyrkan quickly grabbed him.

Shweek!

Hyrkan stabbed his sword into the gap between Cho-oohroong's armor, and the opening in his helm.

Kwah-jeek!

The sword let out a gross sound as it was embedded into the back of Cho-oohroong's neck.

“Kook!”

A scream exploded out from Cho-oohrook's mouth.

Hyrkan didn't stop there. He put more strength into the sword that was embedded in the back of Cho-oohroong's neck. Cho-oohroong's body couldn't overcome Hyrkan's strength. He crumpled forward.

Chul-puh-duhk!

Cho-oohroong had fallen to the floor. Hyrkan immediately stepped hard on the small of his back. Hyrkan made it so that Cho-oohroong wouldn't be able to get up easily. Afterwards, he took out the sword embedded in Cho-oohroong's neck by a little bit, then he pressed down accurately once again.

Pook!

He kept stabbing.

Pook, pook!

It was a consecutive rhythmic sound that would be spat out by a machine.

The battle was already over. Cho-oohroong had taken significant damage, and he wouldn't be able to receive help from others. There was no way he could overturn this situation.

“Shit!”

Cho-oohroong could only bitterly yell out as he lay on the floor. Hyrkan spoke to Cho-oohroong.

“Since you lost in terms of skill, you probably think the slate is wiped clean with me.”

Cho-oohroong bit his lips as if his inner thoughts had been revealed.

“However, I hate thinking that way.”

As he spoke, Hyrkan jabbed as if he was putting a period at the end of his words. The sword was being stabbed into the back of Cho-oohroong's neck.

“Did you think about showing me any special consideration? You only thought about how to screw me over. Do you think I'll give a bastard like that a clean defeat?”

Pook!

Hyrkan kept stabbing with his sword.

Cho-oohroong gritted his teeth.

"Did you lose your mind?"

There was no pain here. There was no way it would exist here. Worse had been done to him in this game.

However, he had never been this angry. His anger boiled within his chest. He was angrier than the time when Cho-oohroong was forcefully cut from the pro-gamer's club without any

compensation. Anger that he had never felt before started filling Cho-oohroong.

“You son of a.....”

Cho-oohrong spat out a curse.

Pook, pook!

Hyrkan stopped Cho-oohroong's words with the use of his sword.

“Huhk!”

The embedded sword dug once again into the back of Cho-oohroong's neck, and the point pierced all the way through the neck. Hyrkan felt the point of his sword embed itself into the ground, and he left his last words.

“You are dead the next time I meet you. I will kill you. No matter what.”

The commotion in the surrounding was calming down at this point.

This allowed most of them to see the corpse of Cho-oohroong beneath Hyrkan's foot. The moment the battle had ended, everyone looked on in silence.

“Cho-oohroong!”

Someone loudly yelled out Cho-oohroong's name. It was a user in the same party as Cho-oohroong. However, it wasn't Cho-oohroong, who reacted the moment he heard the shout. It was Hyrkan. His expression changed.

‘Ah.’

Hyrkan finally remembered.

‘Cho-oohroong..... Yes, he's in the Killer Smile team of the Big Smile guild. That's where I saw this bastard. So why is Big Smile aiming for me?’

Cho-oohroong wasn't able to earn anything this run.

2.

When Cho-oohroong died, a member of his party yelled towards Hyrkan.

“What a cowardly act!”

“Cho-oohroong asked for a fair and honorable fight!”

Hyrkan let out a laugh as if their words were ridiculous. Hyrkan shrugged his shoulder.

“I fought him 1on1 yet you call me cowardly? If I had been unlucky, wouldn't I have fought a 38 vs 1 battle?”

Cho-oohroong's mate was about to raise their voice towards Hyrkan again, but they closed their mouth.

He wasn't wrong. He was a Necromancer, so it would be funny to complain about him using Skeleton Warriors, and Bone Explosives.

“This.....”

Their bodies shook from suppressing their anger. Hyrkan ignored Cho-oohroong's mates, and he looked at the rest of the users.

“This resolves the situation. I fought a 1on1 battle, and the mastermind is dead. We'll start over once again.”

Unlike his earlier words, Hyrkan's words turned respectful.

“We'll start over again. I don't care whether you form another alliance. Let us focus on hunting monsters until the Event Monster comes out. Since this is the Battlefield, I won't require you to follow anything other stipulation.”

After finishing his words, Hyrkan took out the sword piercing Cho-oohroong's neck. Then he hacked at Cho-oohroong's left wrist with his sword.

Kah-ahng!

The sound of steel rang out.

“It seems he is wearing good gauntlets.”

Kah-ahng, kah-ahng!

Hyrkan struck as if he was using an axe. Numerous blows were aimed at Cho-oohroong's hand, which was equipped with a gauntlet. Soon the armor became deformed, and the wrist was severed. Hyrkan kicked at the hand then he gathered the watch.

After he took the watch, Hyrkan spoke as he looked at his surrounding.

“All of you guys have fun.”

After saying those words, Hyrkan quickly left the location. The Skeleton Warriors hastily followed after him.

At that moment...

Koo-ohhhhhh!

The throng of monsters had gathered there after hearing the sound of the explosions.

The Battlefield was once again moving at a breathless pace.

Chapter 78. Golem Upgrade (2)

3.

“Shit!”

One of the users tripped on a rock, and he fell.

Kwahhhng!

The large wolf that was chasing after the user ate almost half his body in one bite.

‘He’s dead.’

‘I’m sorry, Polio.’

The users didn't stay to see the frightening sight of their buddy get eaten. They didn't even glance back. They didn't even think about helping him, since it gave them extra time. They ran away with all their might.

They had used their party member as a sacrificial lamb, and it worked. They no longer heard the breathing or footstep of the wolf. When they reached a location where there was no trace of the wolf, the three party members finally stopped to look back. They were finally able to talk after checking nothing was behind them.

“Shit.”

The same word yelled out by the devoured party member came out of their mouths.

“Even running away isn't easy.”

“Everything is messed up now.”

“Right. When the Hahoe Mask killed most of the priests, there was no point in hunting in parties.”

It had been 88 hours, since the Battlefield had been opened.

Significant amount of time had passed in the Battlefield, and the appearance of the users wasn't something that wasn't befitting the name of the Battlefield. A continuous battle between the monsters and users never took place. There was no breathless battle. The result was a one sided fight. The normal result wasn't the monsters becoming the sacrificial lamb instead it was the users.

The reason was of course Hyrkan.

The Hahoe Mask left after dispatching Cho-oohroong, and seven monsters suddenly showed up in his wake. A significant number of users died once again in this battle against the monsters.

The parties couldn't even communicate with each other amidst such a condition. They just scattered every which way. Of course, they didn't ally with each other anymore. If someone took it upon themselves to make it happen, an alliance could have been formed once again.

However, everyone remembered the fate of Cho-oohroong, who had stepped up to take the lead. They had seen the process live. The image of what happened to him wouldn't fade away from their thoughts.

So the parties started hunting by themselves. Each party put an acceptable amount of distance between each other. They each secured a region, and they started to hunt. Under the silent truce, the parties did what most parties did in the Battlefield.

The problem was most of the parties weren't at their most optimum state. There were parties who had lost a priest, a tanker, or a striker... If one made an analogy, they were like mouths. Some had lost their front tooth, and some had lost their molar. They couldn't chew the monsters properly with a mouth with missing teeth.

The Battlefield was so full of monsters that monsters came looking for users. The users tried to avoid the repeated monster battles, but in the end, all the parties chose to give up.

“The castle gate will open soon. Let's go to the castle gate now. We can logout there, and we can log back in when it's time.”

“Yes. We'll find users in the same situation if we go near the castle gate. Maybe, we'll come to an agreement there to work together.”

“I never thought I would waste my time this way.”

“We were fortunate that we didn't die this time.”

If they overextended themselves in the monster hunt, they would be wiped out. It was better to go to the castle gates to wait, while they still had a somewhat intact party. This was the course taken by users, who had some breathing room. They would log out near the castle gates for safety. Those who had lost a lot of their party members had a hard time even getting to the castle gate.

Of course, this wasn't the case for everyone.

Only one person!

One person's fortune was completely different from the others.

[You have leveled up.]

“All right. My Stats are full! That damn wolf bastard! I'll catch it with myself!”

This one person was overflowing with energy amongst the overflowing horde of monsters. It didn't matter if he was doing well or bad in his hunt, he was enjoying himself.

This one person..... Of course, it was Hyrkan.

Large Wolves, Large Bears, Large Snakes..... The beasts possessed blood colored patterns on their pelt, and they were crowding in front of Hyrkan. Hyrkan threw 3 Bone Explosives as if he was spraying sand.

Kwah-gwah-gwahng!

The expensive Bone Explosives were worth the price of ramens Hyrkan could eat for a month. It was a powerful sight to see the result of the explosions.

While this thunderous roar was ongoing, two Skeleton Warriors wearing Bone Armor, and the Madness Helm immediately ran forward. Each of them had weapons that was easily over 1000 gold, and the battle capability of these Skeleton Warriors were amazing. Their sword cut through the leather of lvl 80 monsters like paper.

Pooh-oohk, suh-guhk, ssoo-oohk!

The sound of stabbing, slicing and chopping was heard. After the roar of the Bone Explosives, the sound of butchery was heard.

Koo-huhng!

The cry of the monsters that followed was closer to a sorrowful sound than a menacing sound. The sight that unfolded in that place was one-sided and overwhelming. It made one feel sorry for the monsters.

Of course, the ones in the worst shape was those who were caught by Hyrkan.

After leveling up, Hyrkan had recovered all his capabilities. Hyrkan charged towards a wolf, who had scratched his body.

‘I’ll fuck you up.’

When he closed the distance, Hyrkan stabbed the short sword into the bastard's eye. In a breath, he jumped on top of the red spotted wolf's body. As soon as he got on the body, he stabbed down with his Fang Sword.

He used the embedded sword as a handle, and he started attacking the wolf's body with another short sword.

Pook pook. Pook, pook!

After he finished stabbing the body four times, a rectangle shaped piece of flesh fell off. When the piece of flesh was dug out, he immediately put something that was hotter than medicine into the wound.

Bone Explosive!

Hyrkan forcefully pushed the powerful item into the hole. Soon, he used all his energy to cause the Bone Explosive to detonate.

Kwahng!

The sound of the exploding Bone Explosive was the quietest one yet, but the result was quite gruesome.

Hoo-doo-doo!

The explosion scattered the blood and flesh into the surrounding. It left behind a grotesque mark.

Koo-roo-roo.....

The wolf was starting to falter. The wolf wasn't able to resist after suffering under the White Mamba's poison, and the accrued damage. He couldn't even struggle. Hyrkan didn't show any mercy to the wolf. Since this bastard's life was almost at an end, Hyrkan wanted to end it more faster and in a more sure manner.

Poohk poohk!

After the terrifying sound rang out consecutive times, the wolf died. After extracting his sword, Hyrkan immediately searched for a new monster. He found one that the Skeleton Warriors were

having a hard time taking down.

There was a smile on Hyrkan's face as he moved his body.

‘All the monsters here are mine!’

The other parties either died before they could fight the monsters properly, or they had given up. Hyrkan didn't know this for sure, but he had predicted events would happen this way.

He had predicted this course of event when he hatched the trap to get rid of the priests with the help of the Mongmart Party.

How could a party go on a normal hunt without their priests?

This was why he had done what he had done. This was why he had left alone the users, who had shown their teeth to him. It was the reason why he had accepted Cho-oothroong's request for a 1on1 battle. Even if Hyrkan didn't act, he knew they would have to retire once their priests had been eliminated.

No competitors meant the most valuable monsters belonged to Hyrkan.

‘The only one left is the Blue Giant’

“Ooh-haha!”

Hyrkan unconsciously let out a laugh as if he was too happy. His laugh rang out through the Battlefield.

4.

Kooh-ooong!

It had blue skin. Its skin color was incongruous with the color of the forest. The giant had a single eye, and it was fallen to the floor like a stiff board of wood. When the giant fell, its body crushed 5 trees with its body, and they were crushed like balled up tissue paper.

There were seven swords sticking out of the fallen Blue Giant's body. A Golem with half its body crushed was nearby, and one of its shoulder was slumping without any strength.

“Hoo-oooh.”

Blue Giant.

He was finally able to take the bastard down. However, Hyrkan didn't let out a cheer in joy. He let out a long sigh.

‘I was barely able to catch it. If I made a wrong move, I might have died.’

It wasn't too hard to find the Blue Giant. It was taller than the trees of the forest, and its skin color was blue. It also had a sense of presence that made it easy to find. He just had to climb up a tree and look around to find it.

The hard part was killing it.

‘Its offensive and defensive ability was subpar, but its HP.... It was really comparable to a Level 100 Boss Monster.’

It was worthy to be called an Event Monster. Its HP was abnormally high. Since it had so much HP, Hyrkan had to use a lot of time to catch it. He had used up 28 minutes. Hyrkan's damage dealing was incredible. He had the Skeleton Warriors, Skeleton Mages, and the Golem. If he mixed in some curse magic, he could deal damage that was comparable to a 5 man party. Once he started to liberally use the Bone Explosives, his damage dealing couldn't even be compared to a 5 man team.

This was why Hyrkan was able to end this fight around the 30 minute mark.

‘Is this what they call it a blessing in disguise?’

He had been able to catch this monster, because of the current situation.

If he had to catch it in an environment with a lot of competitors, he wouldn't have been able to take it down easily. Moreover, it

would have been impossible to catch it in secret. He would have been constantly interfered with. He would have had to adopt a hit & run strategy, and this might have opened up the possibility of someone else stealing the monster.

In the end, if Cho-oohroong didn't aggressively chase after Hyrkan, this opportunity would have never come to Hyrkan.

‘So why the hell is Cho-oohroong trying so hard to catch me? Did I somehow meddle with Big Smile?’

That was the part where he still had his misgivings.

He didn't think Cho-oohroong simply moved against him, because he coveted Hyrkan's fame. Hyrkan didn't think Cho-oohroong would move for such a personal reason. The Big Smile wasn't an organization that was loose with their members.

This meant someone in Big Smile had order Cho-oohroong to eliminate Hyrkan. This was hard to comprehend even for him. Hyrkan hadn't crossed Big Smile yet. Not at this point in time.

‘No. Moreover, the Big Smile shouldn't have time for me right now.’

The Big Smile wasn't in a position where they would be able to spare their attention to Hyrkan. Currently, they were in war with Triple Wing, and they were a troublesome group to deal with. If they bothered Hyrkan in such a situation, they were basically

adding on to their troubles.

‘Any ways, the 30 great guilds only have assholes.’

It was clear from Hyrkan's perspective. They had attacked him out of the blue. Hyrkan had quickly evaded the attack, and he had sent back a counterpunch. He was able to earn a watch, but it didn't mean he would forgive Big Smile. It was the opposite.

‘Let's see what happens when you come into my crosshair, Big Smile. I'll shatter you guys into pieces.’

Hyrkan put Big Smile right below the Stormhunters on his list. It was obvious, but it wasn't a good place to be if you were ranked under the Stormhunters.

Hyrkan was brooding over his revenge list when it happened.

[The Battlefield's Even Monster 'Blue Giant' has fallen.]

Everyone within the Battlefield was given the announcement. Hyrkan also heard the announcement.

When he heard the announcement, he touched the app on his wrist watch.

Hyrkan smiled when he saw the time.

‘If I come back after a nap, it'll be perfect.’

It was almost time for him to leave the stage called the Battlefield.

4.

- I'm sorry.

When he heard Cho-oohroong's answer, Heh-bibin didn't spit out his boiling anger. He spoke in a calm manner.

“Today's events will be a bitter medicine for you. Don't forget about today's event, and go reflect on what you did wrong.”

- I will take your words to heart.

“You did well. Go rest for awhile..”

- I'm sorry.

When the phone call ended, Heh-bibin clenched both of his hands into fists. If he had his handphone in his hand, he would have thrown it against the wall. Fortunately, he was within the game, so he couldn't do that.

‘Fuck.’

Heh-bibin answered calmly, because he valued Cho-oohroong. If it had been someone other than Cho-oohroong, he wouldn't have let it go so easily.

Heh-bibin had taken a big hit from this job. The immediate monetary damage wasn't that high.

‘Apollo. That bastard knows about this.’

The problem was Apollo. He was very underhanded, and he wouldn't let go of this information easily.

‘He'll try to use me through blackmail.’

Heh-bibin was an officer of the Big Smile, and it was an opportunity where Apollo would be able to put him to the fire.

Since he didn't want Hahoe Mask to realize Cho-oohroong was part of Big Smile, he would have to accept whatever deal Apollo presented. This was a headache inducing situation.

The worst case scenario was the Hahoe Mask finding out the connection between Cho-oothroong and Big Smile. If he joined forces with their enemy, Triple Wing, then this wouldn't end at just hurt feelings.

Big Smile might be kicked out of their spot in the 30 great guild.

‘Shit.’

Heh-bibin's heart burned into a black crisp when he thought about such a scenario.

It seemed someone wanted to burn Heh-bibin's heart once again.

“Shit.”

A single call arrived. After checking the call was from Apollo, he gritted his teeth before he answered the phone. While he was gritting his teeth, he let the anger within his heart bleed out.

‘Hahoe Mask. You will pay for this.’

Chapter 79. Golem Upgrade (3)

5.

Ggiiii!

The firmly shut castle gate let out a bizarre sound, and it started to lower slowly. These users had waited outside the castle walls. When the castle gate was lowered, the waiting users all frowned.

“Shit.”

There was no shout of joy. A bitter sound came out of all the user's' mouth.

“This Battlefield run was completely ruined.”

“Still, aren't we fortunate? We survived. The number of dead users are quite numerous...”

“Like hell it is. We pointlessly messed with the Hahoe Mask..... If we acted normally, we would have gotten a good amount of EXP and Items even if we couldn't take down the Event Monster. Why did we do what we did!”

“Hey! Why are you getting mad at me? You said it was a good idea. Didn't you agree to it?”

“Yeah. However, weren't you the one, who talked to that bastard, Cho-oohroong?”

This was a stage where the reward was larger than ever. This was why everyone had high expectations on this event. It wasn't an over exaggeration to say they had ambition in their heart.

However, they didn't receive any reward. Instead, they were forced to eat a big pile of shit. They were a mess as they waited for the castle gate to be lowered. They weren't even able to hunt monsters. In the end, they had to waste a massive amount of time. If someone felt good about this situation, the person needed to get their head checked.

Kooohng!

While the users were blaming each other, the massive gates reverberated as if someone was knocking on the floor.

Chuh-buhk chuh-buhk!

As if they had been waiting for this, the NPCs were on standby beyond the castle gate, and they started to cross over using the castle gate as a bridge.

They were knights.

Every one of them had shining armor on. At a glance, one could tell the armor was expensive, and it had a lot of options. The

knights also had a sense of dignity that went well with the armors. There were 13 knights. All the knights wore helms, so it was impossible to find out their identity.

There were exactly 11 users.

Amongst the 13 knights, there was one that was noticeably smaller than the others. It was easy to discern his identity.

‘It's Bagel.’

‘There's Bagel.’

As the users guessed, the short knight was the castle's owner and its manager. It was Bagel.

As if he was answering the user's' expectation, he revealed his identity through his voice.

“From now on!”

When Bagel shouted out those words, the 12 knights moved quickly. After they moved outside of the castle gate, they formed a semi-circular formation. They took off the shields equipped on their backs, and they placed it in front of them. The semi-circular line was like a castle wall when the knights placed their large shields in front of them.

After the formation was solidified, Bagel finished his speech.

“I'll give you 1 hour!”

After the speech ended, the users enter the castle gate one or two at a time. Each user's shoulders were slumped.

Stragglers.

There wasn't any other word that could describe what they were. They had wasted their time. The 144 hours wasn't a short amount of time. All they could do was reflect on their actions.

From behind them, they heard a voice that gave off a different feeling from their own.

“You guys were all here?”

The owner of the excited voice was none other than Hyrkan.

“Did you guys all do well in your hunt? Did you have fun? I had a really good hunt. Do you see this? I had so much Ingredient Coins that it was a chore to pick out the best ones! Ooh-haha!”

Hyrkan stabbed a dagger into the heart of the stragglers, who had barely survived.

This was Hyrkan's last revenge.

6.

“Amazing.”

Hyrkan had entered Bagel's office, and Hyrkan was sitting face to face with him. Bagel's expression was honest as he complimented Hyrkan. Hyrkan slightly lowered his head as he received the compliment.

“No. I only carried out the mission you gave me.”

“You carried out the mission. You carried out the mission.....”

It seemed Bagel really liked what Hyrkan had said. He even recited Hyrkan's words a second time to mull over it.

“I like that expression. You carried out the mission.”

While he was watching this, Hyrkan was glum inside.

‘I don't give a shit if it is a good expression. Just hurry up and give me the reward.’

He had no more business with the Battlefield. Each minute and second was precious to Hyrkan. He wanted to just received the

reward then leave. However, Bagel had no idea what was in Hyrkan's mind, so Bagel spoke for almost 10 minutes.

It wasn't as if he was talking about some meaningless story.

“Recently, the number of monsters have significantly increased. Amongst them, there are some bizarre ones that we have never seen before.”

“These monsters have blue skin, and they let out a frigid energy..... They do not belong in the forest located across the castle wall, and they are growing in number.”

“In my opinion, if one travels past the forest on the other side of the castle wall, one would come across another forest. I think these bastards are coming from an unknown place beyond that forest.”

“If you have a chance in the future, I would like you to break the frontier of the land beyond the forest. I want you to find out what's on the other side of the forest. We are at a time where we will have to attack first to survive.”

He was giving out information.

There was a new stage beyond the Battlefield. Bagle was giving him hints about the Frozen Kingdom.

‘I'll take off the Ice Queen's head for you later. Just stop talking, and give me the Skill Book.’

It was a precious clue, but from Hyrkan's perspective, he already knew all of this. Basically, this was useless chatter.

Hyrkan endured through the 10 minutes that felt like 10 hours. Then Bagel finally gave Hyrkan the book.

‘Oh!’

At a glance, the cover of this book was different from a normal book. The cover was bound with black leather, which gave off a very luxurious feeling. There was a handprint on the leather cover, but it looked more like a unique design. It looked as if a master artisan had put his heart and soul into making it.

‘Finally’

The Unique Skill Book had finally appeared. Hyrkan rejoiced.

However, Bagel didn't give the book to Hyrkan immediately. Bagel continued to speak after he took out the book.

“This is a present I am only giving to you. I will never give this out to anyone again. It is only for you.”

Hyrkan laughed inside.

‘It said the reward belonged only to the user, who acquired it.

Still, was it necessary for him to say all that? Couldn't he have just given it to me?’

“Yes. I will receive it with thanks.”

He had no thoughts of giving it away to someone else. Hyrkan was afraid Bagel was going talk more, so he immediately put his hand over the cover with the hand print.

[The identity of the Skill Book is revealed.]

The no name Skill Book was unsealed.

‘It would be a jackpot if something like Voodoo Skeleton came out. Please let it be Voodoo Skeleton. Voodoo Skeleton! Come out Voodoo Skeleton!’

Hyrkan's heart was racing when a new announcement popped up.

[Would you like to learn the Clay Play Skill?]

‘Huh?’

This was the first time he had seen this kill.

‘Clay Play?’

It was a skill he had never seen before, and it was a name he couldn't come up with even if he tried. A question mark formed on top of Hyrkan's head.

However, there was only one choice for Hyrkan at this moment.

[You have learned the Clay Play Skill.]

He had no choice, but to learn it.

‘What is it?’

Hyrkan had a confused expression on his face, when Bagel tried to speak to Hyrkan once again.

“I hope this will make you stronger, and I hope you will show me more brilliant exploits in the future.”

“What?”

“Across that forest.....”

It seemed Bagel wasn't going to let go of Hyrkan any time soon.

7.

[Clay Play]

- Proficiency : Rank F
- Skill Use : A monster's gem is used as sacrifice. The Golem can transform into the sacrificed monster. The gem is consumed when used.
- Miscellaneous : The Golem will take on the outward appearance of the monster. As the Skill Proficiency increases, the Golem will get closer to the original monster's capabilities.

There is an exception. It won't be able to use the monster's skills classified as Special Ability. Also, the monster cannot be bigger than summoned Golem. Moreover, the Defense and Stamina won't change.

Clay Play Skill.

‘So if I sacrifice the gem dropped by a monster, it can take on the same appearance as that monster?’

Basically, the very lackluster appearance of the Golem could be changed into a monster's shape with this skill. Of course, only the appearance changed. As the Skill Use explained, its Defense and Stamina wouldn't change. However, if the sacrificed monster gem was of high level, the Golem could almost reach the offensive capability of the monster once the Skill Proficiency was raised. Basically, the outer appearance and the Attack Stat was being copied.

The downside was quite obvious.

‘It's a skill that requires money once again.’

Every time he used this skill it would consume a gem. If it was a Boss Monster gem, a single use of this skill would consume at least couple hundred gold. On the high side, he might have to use a gem worth couple thousand to hundred thousand gold.

This was on a different level than the Armament Skill. If he armed the Skeletons with weapons, he could take it back and resell the weapons on a later date. This skill used up the gem. It was like the Bone Explosives.

Moreover, the characteristics of the golem made it hard to travel with it. In Hyrkan's case, he sometimes had to run away or hide during battle. In a day, there were times when he had to re-summon the golem several times a day.

He had a lot of places where he had to spend his money on. He

even had to cut back on his food money, and living costs. This skill could a critical blow for Hyrkan. He had been eating only ramen and kimchi these days. This skill was the critical blow that could eliminate kimchi from his daily diet.

‘If the Golem could copy the monster's battle AI then this is a jackpot.’

However, Hyrkan wasn't disappointed by this turn of events.

It was the opposite. This was an incredible deal if the Golem could copy the battle AI alongside the appearance. It couldn't copy the special ability or skill possessed by the monster, but the monsters were designed to face numerous users. This meant their battle AI was outstanding. Moreover, it was normally almost impossible to train the Golem's battle AI like the Skeleton Warriors.

Also, there were skills that could reinforce the Golem's lack of Defense and Stamina. It was possible to cover up the deficiency. He would even be able to change its attribute. There were the Fire, Ice and Iron Golem Skills. This Skill had the chance to be as powerful as the Armament Skill.

‘Wait a moment. Will I be able to make those mosters? Can I make a Wyvern or a Griffin?’

It might be possible for him to ride it.

In fact, the Golem had Travel mode, except the Golem was too slow. The ride quality was the worst, so no one used it. However, if he used the Clay Play Skill to change the Golem into a flying monster, Hyrkan would be able to earn a frightening amount of mobility.

Great mobility was valued much more than Unique Items in Warlord.

‘I never expected such a Skill to be in existence.’

It was a surprising Skill. Moreover, he had never seen this Skill before, so the surprise Hyrkan felt was that much bigger. Hyrkan had never seen it. It was a skill that had never come out on Rich Lich's Solo Raid vids. Basically, it was a skill that even Rich Lich didn't have. Rich Lich was someone, who had so much money, that it was rotting away. Yet Hyrkan was able to get his hand on a Skill that Rich Lich didn't have.

‘I'll have to test this Skill out first. I'll have to make a proper evaluation.’

8.

‘I'm finally level 90.’

He used his Tablet PC to check Hyrkan's Stats, Item Setting, and Items in possession. Ahnjaehyun put his empty hand into a bag of chips. The bag of chips was so large that it swallowed his arm up to

the elbow.

However, Ahnjaehyun's hand came back out empty. Ahnjaehyun's gaze left the Tablet PC, and it headed towards the inside of the bag. There was only crumbs left. Ahnjaehyun frowned when he saw this.

‘I didn’t eat a lot of it yet it's already empty?’

He could eat as much caviar sushi inside the virtual reality, but Ahnjaehyun was stuck with a bag of chips filled with nitrogen.

Chet!

Ahnjaehyun clicked his tongue.

‘The world is only filled with thieving bastards.’

He moved his gaze away from the empty bag of chips, and he checked the time.

‘It's time to go to the dream land.’

It was time to sleep. He would sleep for 5 hours. After his physical body recovered, he would connect to Warlord like always.

Then he will go on a trip.

‘I’ll be finally going to the great Urugal mountain range.’

The great Urugal mountain range!

He hadn't been able to attempt it, since his level was lacking. Now he would have to depart towards this scary, and desolate land.

Hyrkan's character was already on standby inside the Parung forest. He had already finished gathering the consumable Items. He also readied his confidence.

‘I haven't advanced yet, but I should be able to reach the entrance of the Urugal mountain range without dying.’

Of course, if he moved after reaching level 100 and advancing in rank, he would be able to travel much more safely.

The problem was time as always!

Currently, the Stormhunter guild had caught up right behind Ahnjaehyun. The Stormhunter guild had already took over the Parung Forest, and they were getting ready to take down the Helm Ogre.

Truthfully, the Stormhunters were ready to fight the Helm Ogre at a much earlier time. They had already sent out a notification

into the surrounding. There was a reward for the user that could find and provide the location of the Helm Ogre. Moreover, those who helped the Stormhunters, would be given ample compensation.

Of course, they didn't say they didn't have to say they would punish those, who catches the Helm Ogre, instead of them. However, most Warlord users inside the Parung Forest knew enough to stay out the Stormhunter's business. Nothing good would come from interfering with them. When that information came out, it was fair to say the Helm Ogre was basically the property of the Stormhunters.

However, another group had caught the Helm Ogre before them.

When he thought about that incident, it made Ahnjaehyun let out a hearty laugh.

‘I don't know who those users are, but I'll have to give them some medicine if I come across them in the future. Those lovely users did a very lovely act.’

It wasn't known who had caught the Helm Ogre. However, if one looked at the surrounding circumstances, there was high possibility that one of the 30 great guilds secretly caught the Helm Ogre. It was probably done to cause a setback for the Stormhunters. No one in the 30 great guilds wanted the Stormhunters to leave them in the dust.

Ahnjaehyun had gained some time, but he couldn't delay any

longer. He had a reason why he had to hurry.

‘I will never lose to the Stormhunters!’

For the last time, Ahnjaehyun check the youtube page views, and the support payment. Then he immediately went into his sleeping place.

snore snore

Soon, the snoring sound of sleeping Ahnjaehyun filled the small one room.

9.

The 5 man party was using the fallen tree as a bench.

It was a very strange mix of users. It was a 5 man party yet there were no Priests or Magicians in this group.

Each of the 5 users wore armor, and they all had at least one weapon. The Items equipped by them were quite diverse. There was no unifying look to their Items. The color and design of the items were all different.

However, they were all powerful Items.

The Items worn by these 5 people had the best options for the current standards of Warlord. These items boasted the highest level and price. This was akin to the best sports cars of different models being gathered in one place.

“Should we go catch the Helm Ogre?”

“Don't spout such nonsense. The best members of Stormhunters were dispatched to the Parung Forest. If the 5 of us go there, it would be tough even for us to survive. Truthfully, we were lucky last time.”

“Still, we should accept the risk to interfere with them. We'll be able to give the Stormhunters a big setback in progressing their Main Scenario Quest. Moreover, they wouldn't know we did it. I'm sure this will lead to a war.”

“Still, we should know our limit. Isn't it more important for us to block the Hydra guild? I cannot find out any information about their Main Scenario Quest. I'm sure they are the furthest along amongst the 30 Great Guilds.”

“From what I heard, Red Bulls and the Sweeper guilds are unexpectedly fast in their progress.”

“Of course, everyone is fast. They are spending a lot of money on this game. It would be absurd if their progress was slow after spending that much.”

“Uh?”

“Uh.”

“Ah!”

They all stopped their conversation, and they focused on their ear. The 5 of them stood up at the same time.

“I'm going north.”

“Let's go together! Moreover, where will the rest of you guys be going?”

“North, South, or East. I'll choose from one of those three. First, I have to meet up with the Triple Wing. I don't know where I'll go.”

“You are going to suffer some hardship this time.”

“Our actions won't have meaning if we don't suffer hardships.”

“I guess so.”

When the conversation ended, they didn't even say farewell. They immediately dispersed.

Chapter 80. Olf's Errand

1.

Great Urugal Mountain Range.

Most users didn't even realize such a landmark existed in Warlord. It was an obscure stage, yet it was crawling with powerful monsters that would suit even the famous Ranked users of Warlord.

A single user was running through such a dangerous land by himself.

Pah-aht, paht!

There weren't any paths that could be called a road in sight. The user was incredibly fast as he ran across the rugged terrains at full speed. He wasn't simply fast. Obstacles like rocks and tree roots continuously appeared, but he avoided them all. He even used some obstacle to push off of it to increase his speed. He looked like an animal.

At the same time, one could see his desperate resolve.

The reason for this user's will was the existence following right behind him.

Kuhng kuhng kuhng!

A black dog was letting out rugged barks. Its outer appearance looked akin to a greyhound. It had a sleek black body that made it look agile.

However, no one would dare to call this monster a dog. Its body was longer than 3 meters even when one discounted the length of the tail. It was massive, and its eyes were burning. It wasn't a metaphor. It had big burning flames for eyes.

The most striking sight was the slobber that flew out as it ran. The dog slobber flew out of the panting muzzle, and it boasted a power to melt the vegetations and rocks in the surrounding. It was horrifying to think about what would happen when one was bitten with a mouth full of such saliva.

This monster, which caused him to imagine such a horrible scenario, was named the Black Hound. It was over level 130, and it was nicknamed the Priest Killer. It was a nickname that sent shivers down the hunters, who enjoyed party hunting.

Some basic monsters reacted to magic attacks as they prioritized attacking mages first. The Black Hound was unique in that it reacted to healing and buff skills. It prioritized attacking the priests. When one becomes poisoned from its bite, it couldn't be healed through a low rank Antidote Skill. It was an extremely potent poison. This was why it was nicknamed the Priest Killer.

Currently, it was showcasing its incredibly fast speed. This

monster was most suited for hunting and tracking than any other monster. When it was first revealed in Warlord, a 10 man party had come across it. The combined level of the party was over 1,100, yet they weren't able to put up much of a fight. The party was wiped out in 20 minutes.

‘Shit!’

Hyrkan had picked up a tracker of that caliber, and it felt as if he was about to die.

‘If only I had a Wyvern Golem, I wouldn't have to go through all this hardship!’

As he ran, Hyrkan recalled what had happened for the past couple days.

Hyrkan had earned the Clay Play skill as reward from the Battlefield two days ago. He immediately started experimentation to find out more about the skill. He had used a lot of money to purchase various types of monster gems. He used the ingredient gems as sacrifice to change the Golem into various monsters.

Hyrkan had really wanted to fly, but he had failed to obtain the requisite ingredients. However, he had found something about the Skill. The important part was the Skill Proficiency of the Skill. At Rank F, the Clay Play Skill gained only half the capability of the monster that was being copied. If one only had half the Specs, it would be impossible to fly.

In other words, he needed to get as close to 100% of the monster's stat. Then he would be able use a Wyvern golem, Griffin Golem or even a Dragon Golem as a private plane. This could happen only if his Skill Rank was high enough.

Anyways, he would have to delay the plan of using a monster as a private plane. Hyrkan used his two legs to approach the great Urugal mountain range. This was two days ago.

‘I've been running away for two whole days..... Why the hell am I doing this, while paying a lot of money to play this game? Sometimes it really make me wonder.’

For the past two days, Hyrkan had traveled around the entrance of the great Urugal mountain range to search for the blacksmith olf. When monsters showed up, he didn't even battle them. He ran away. It was rare for him to experience a proper battle. Of course, he saw several monsters he had wanted to catch.

However, all the monsters that appeared at the great Urugal mountain range were difficult to take down for Hyrkan. He needed to spend a considerable amount of time fighting any of the monsters here, and he would be making a lot of noise in the process. It would attract monsters like the Black Hound, and the act of running away was difficult in itself.

It was apparent he would become a target of uncommon monsters.

Moreover, when facing a monster like the Black Hound, one

didn't get away for free.

“Chet.”

Hyrkan clicked his tongue. He didn't throw just one Skeleton Fragment. He had to throw three of them into the distance. After falling to the ground, the Skeleton Fragments immediately took form into becoming Skeleton Warriors. Each Skeleton Warrior were 2 meter tall, and they each held a well-used sword. Their appearance was imposing. They looked as if they were ready to cut down the drooling black dog with a single slash.

However, the Skeleton Warriors didn't stand a chance with the Black Hound. They weren't even able to attack it once.

It happened in a flash.

The Black Hound chasing Hyrkan moved like the wind, and it munched on the two Skeleton Warriors at the same time.

It took a bite.

Kwah-jeek!

It chewed them in a single bite.

In a flash, the skull of the two Skeleton Warriors were crushed like a hollow candies. Hyrkan's Magic immediately decreased.

In a flash, the Black Hound bit into the skull of the last remaining Skeleton Warrior. The Black Hound's movement was surprisingly fast. The Skeleton Warriors trained by Hyrkan didn't even stand a chance.

Hyrkan gritted his teeth when he saw the massive amount of his magic being consumed in second.

‘It really is like a dog.’

Hyrkan was barely able to run away after sacrificing his 3 Skeleton Warriors. He gritted his teeth, and he made a new resolve.

‘When I hit level 100 and advance in my Class, I'll hunt down every one of these bastards. I'll melt their flesh, and I'll cut their bones into bits and pieces. Then I'll scatter it across the world.’

It was a frightening thought, but if one thought carefully on it, it was the same kind of thoughts Hyrkan always brooded over. He met the blacksmith Olf on the 30th hour after he had left the Parung Forest.

2.

The meeting with the blacksmith Olf was intense.

He was 130cm tall. Hyrkan would have to sit on a knee-high stool to be able to come face to face with the short dwarf. In the beginning, Hyrkan wasn't even aware the dwarf was there. The short dwarf quickly headed towards him, and Hyrkan had a hard time identifying, who this person was.

When the distance between the two of them decreased, Olf swung the enormous hammer in his hand towards Hyrkan's stomach.

“Kuhk!”

His single attack blasted Hyrkan into the air like a tennis ball, and he was slammed into a tree. His HP had been 85% full, but in a flash, it dropped below 1%.

‘I have to live!’

Hyrkan was barely able to save his life. He instinctively took out the recovery items hidden in various parts of his armor, and he started downing them into his mouth.

This was the most intense greeting Hyrkan had ever received.

While he was doing all of this, Olf stood in front of Hyrkan. Hyrkan was on the floor as he looked up at Olf.

“Who are you?”

Hyrkan once again let his instinct guide his action. He raised his right hand. It was the hand with the ring on. It was the Proof of the Secret Society. Hyrkan had his glove on, so the ring wasn't visible. Fortunately, Olf had the ability to immediately recognize his own handiwork.

Olf was getting ready to bring down the hammer on Hyrkan's head, but he put the hammer, which was as tall as he was, down on the floor.

Koohng!

The hammer's head dropped to the floor, and the sound was unusually loud. Without realizing it, Hyrkan eyed the head of the hammer. At the same time, he fell into his thoughts. He even forgot the situation he was in right now.

‘So that's the famous Olf's Hammer..... It is a monstrous weapon that takes off a percentage of a user's HP...’

The item he had only seen through the vids was right in front of his eyes. However, Hyrkan wasn't given any time to admire it.

“So you are the human sent by the Maeung. The Maeung contacted me a while back that he'll be sending someone. You are finally here. What the hell were you doing while you were coming here?”

Olf's words were very curt.

‘.....it is as I've heard. This character was designed to piss off the users. I've just started to talk to him, yet he is making me angry.’

Hyrkan's feeling was about to go through an abrupt change when it happened.

[You've received the Title 'Someone who have met the Blacksmith Olf.']

[You've received the Title 'The First One to meet Olf.']

The announcement for the titles popped up.

‘Uh? It gives two titles?’

It suddenly cooled Hyrkan's boiling anger inside. Hyrkan's expression changed.

“I'm sorry for being late!”

At that moment, Hyrkan meant what he said.

‘It gave me not one but two?’

He had expected to get a single title. It was very difficult to meet Olf. If a user forced himself to meet Olf, the Blacksmith would ruthlessly kill you. If one considered how difficult it was to meet Olf, the title was to be expected.

The title was 'Someone who have met the Blacksmith Olf.' Its option was to increase the Class attribute by 25 points. It was a great title.

However, this was the first time Hyrkan saw the title, 'The First One to Meet Olf.'

‘Someone ate it in secret.’

Who would have guessed such a title existed?

On top of that, the title was in Hyrkan's possession now. From Hyrkan's perspective, he wanted to kiss Olf on the lips even if he had a dirty and unruly beard.

Olf had no idea what Hyrkan was thinking, so he looked on with cold eyes.

Hyrkan stared back into Olf's eyes

Silence had descended.

Within the silence, Hyrkan once again organized the information

he had about Olf in his head.

‘I never expected to meet him like this.’

Blacksmith Olf was a NPC and he was one of the top 10 most famous figures in Warlord. He created a lot of uproar, since Olf had a hand in bringing out a good number of Epic Items in Warlord. These Epic Items had tremendous options.

At the same time, Olf was the most inhospitable NPC towards the users. The treatment Hykan had received was the norm. Unless one has a special quest or qualification, the hostile Olf attacked the user on the spot. His attacks were incredible. Even Level 200 users wouldn't dare go up against him.

This was why several users had teamed up together to take revenge on Olf, but no one had ever succeeded. Olf was one of the strongest NPC in Warlord.

Moreover, Olf had the Olf's Hammer, which allowed him to easily destroy the users. It was a famous item made by the game, and it was known for its cheat option.

‘It's the hammer worth 1 hundred thousand dollar cash.’

Some wealthy user had put a bounty out saying he'll give 1 hundred thousand dollars to the person, who brought him the hammer.

Of course, it was a nonsensical request. Olf's Hammer couldn't be gained even if one killed Olf. If Olf was killed... If Olf died, the Quests within the game couldn't progress, so the item was made to prevent such a scenario.

‘Wasn't there a guild formed specifically to get that bounty?’

However, there were always couple crazy bastards in the world, who wanted to try the impossible.

Hyrkan thought about the memories of that time. He had on a bitter smile inside.

‘.....so how long do I have to stay here like this?’

Hyrkan had organized the thoughts in his head, but Olf was still staring down at Hyrkan.

His gaze wasn't that welcoming. It gave off the impression that he was looking at a trash. It was enough to twist one's mood from being viewed that way. Hyrkan had no idea why they would design a NPC like him. He really was curious as to why someone would create such a character.

Eventually Hyrkan ran out of patience, so he opened his mouth.

“Boss Maeung wanted me to help Olf-nim...”

“How can I trust a bastard like you with my business?”

Olf cut off his words like a knife.

“Please test my abilities.”

“A test?”

Olf laughed hard in derision through his beard, and it cut away at Hyrkan's mood.

“Yes. I will pass any test you give me to prove my competence.”

“Poo-poohp!”

The overly embellished laughter was spat out by Olf. Olf stamped the finishing touch on Hyrkan's foul mood.

Hyrkan pressed down hard on the anger that was about to burst out of him.

‘You son of a bitch. Once I hit level 300, you are dead. No, level 300 would be too low. Maybe, at level 350... I should be on the safe side.... Yes, you are dead once I hit level 400.’

At that moment, a new goal was formed inside Hyrkan.

Suddenly, Olf took off a pouch from his belt, and he threw it at Hyrkan.

“Go find those pale bastards at the Baheim Forest, and deliver this pouch to them..”

[Quest 'Olf's Errand' has started.]

His words were brief.

After he spoke the single sentence, Olf grabbed his hammer, and he immediately turned his body.

“W...wait a moment!”

Olf didn't give Hyrkan the chance to hold him up. Olf disappeared in a flash from Hyrkan's side.

‘Ah. It's the Shadow Boots!’

Hyrkan finally realized Olf had the Shadow Boots. The item had the option to make one disappear from a user's sight in an instant.

‘If I had the Olf's Hammer and the Shadow Boots, I could take care of the Stormhunters. It would be like a work out. Ah, I really want those items.’

After Hyrkan shook his head from side to side, he stood up.

After standing up, Hyrkan looked down at his stomach. His defensive gear was ruined. If he repaired it, it would be back to normal. However, for the time being, he would have to leave it in its damaged state.

“Shit.”

‘If you hit a person, you should at least leave behind the repair fee. I had to go through all kinds of hardship just to meet that fucking NPC.’

After he let out a short burst of cuss words, he let out a really deep sigh.

‘Anyways, I've taken care of the difficult part.’

He had successfully carried out his mission of meeting Olf at the great Urugal mountain range without being killed. He really accomplished a big task. If Hyrkan had followed the balance of Warlord, he wouldn't have even been able to attempt this task at this level, yet he succeeded.

At the same time, a new task had been given to him.

“The Baheim Forest...”

Baheim Forest.

‘It has been awhile since I've met an Elf.’

Its other name was the Forest of the Elves.

Chapter 81. Olf's Errand (2)

3.

[Hyrkan]

- Level : 90

- Class : Magician

- Title : 47

- Stat : Strength(895)/Stamina(357)/Intelligence(538)/Magic(664)

After looking at his Stats, Hyrkan blinked as his eyes widened. Then he looked at his Stat Window once again.

‘What's going on?’

A user of Hyrkan's caliber was well acquainted with his Stats. It was preposterous to not be able to recognize his own Stats. He would forget his phone number or home address before he would forget his Stats. It was unthinkable. Moreover, Hyrkan wasn't that great at math, but he was proficient enough to calculate the Stat values within his head.

‘It seems all my Stats got a 3 percent increase? Am I seeing this wrong?’

Hyrkan quickly finished his calculation, then he checked the title.

[The First One to Meet Olf]

Title Effect : All Stat is increased by 3 percent.

Hyrkan stopped breathing.

‘Wow.’

All Stats increased by 3 percent!

‘I knew the blacksmith Olf gave out a lot of good stuff, but I never expected such a good title.’

Olf didn’t make make Rare or Unique Item. Olf was associated with making Epic Items, so he was a NPC that gave out a lot of title with good effects. The Epic Items also had a lot of ties with the Main Quests.

Hyrkan was well aware of this fact. However, Hyrkan had never been the main character to receive such Items or Titles until now.

‘He really is an incredible bastard.’

Hyrkan rubbed his stomach.

‘Although, his personality is bad, and he is annoying.’

He had received an unexpected present, and Hyrkan immediately checked the content of the Quest.

[Olf's Errand]

- Quest Rank : Unique
- Quest Level Range : None
- Quest Content : Deliver the item given to you by Olf to the Baheim Forest.
- Quest Reward : None

The Quest Content wasn't anything unique. It was a quest with no special rewards attached to it.

‘He really is just using me as an errand boy.’

Basically, it was a trash quest.

However, he had no choice, but to carry this quest out even if there was no reward.

Still, that didn't mean it was an easy quest.

‘The Baheim Forest..... Isn't it at the Clapper Jungle?’

The Baheim Forest was actually a forest where one of the Elf tribe lived. It contained a village where the Baheim tribe lived.

The users enjoyed meeting the Elves in Warlord. Amongst the races, they enjoyed the highest popularity.

Weren't the Elves a race known for their beauty? Unless one was killed by being pierced by an Elf's arrow, there was no reason to hate the Elves.

Actually, the fondness for the Elves were a little bit overboard in some cases. There were some users that showed excessive interest in the Elves. Some did party play with an Elf NPC. Some even showed affection towards them. Moreover, there were users, who wanted to become a couple with an Elf NPC within the game. There were extremely disgraceful users, whose life mission was to make this come true.

‘Maybe I should have shown some some interest in the Elves in the past??’

Unfortunately, it was quite hard to meet the Elves in Warlord.

Like the blacksmith Olf, one needed a related Quest to be able to talk to the Elves.

Of course, the information regarding these Quests were released a little bit later on. However, at this point in the game, the information regarding the specific Quest Route for meeting the Elves were almost never traded.

Hyrkan also didn't have much information on the Elves.

He knew the Baheim Elf Tribe was at the Clapper Jungle. However, he didn't know that info, because he was interested in the Elves. He knew it since this had been part of the Main Scenario Quest content.

Basically, he would have to find out the specifics of the content by bumping his body against it.

‘Even if I worry about it, I won't find an answer.’

Of course, it was meaningless to worry about it right now. Hyrkan turned his head. The Clapper Jungle was located north of the great Urugal mountain range. Hyrkan had his head turned northward.

‘All right.’

Hyrkan reaffirmed his resolve.

It happened at that moment.

Kuhng kuhng!

A dog started barking with all its might from behind Hyrkan. He turned his head around in fright.

He caught sight of a single black dog.

“Shit!”

Hyrkan started running, and the drooling Black Hound chased crazily after Hyrkan.

‘When I advance in rank, I’ll kill every one of those sons of bitches.’

Hyrkan left the great Urugal mountain range, and he head towards the Clapper Jungle.

4.

Clapper Jungle.

The enormous trees shot into the sky as if it didn't know the boundary of the sky. The Clapper Jungle was filled with the Clapper trees, and it was one of the most famous and magnificent view in Warlord.

Streams meandered to the middle of the Jungle, and it had formed a lake. It was majestic to see the Clapper trees from afar, but it was much more impressive within the jungle. The trees reached high into the sky, it gave the illusion that there was a green colored sky above. The place held a profound and mysterious beauty. When the first user to find the Clapper Jungle recorded the video of the scenery, it drew 30 million views even though the footage was 3 hours long.

The Clapper Jungle was the main hunting ground used by users between level 100 to 110.

The most common monsters were the Tree Bark Snake, Hook Praying Mantis, and the Cursed Trapper Tree. It wasn't a place where one earned very good items or EXP, but it was a decent hunting ground.

The users, who used the Clapper Jungle as their stage, gathered at Clapper Village, which was located at the entrance of the jungle. The Clapper Village was quite large, and it even had a branch of the Subjugation Association there.

However, the most striking part of this place wasn't the village's size or the superb view of the Clapper Jungle. It was the users, who used this place as their stage.

There was a clear difference between the users over level 100 and below 100. It was the difference between possessing a powerful power after finishing the Advancement, and not having it.

First, once one finishes one's Advancement, one's occupation that showed up on the Stat Window changed. One could get a specialized Class instead of the Swordsman, Priest, Magician Class designation. There was the Fighter and Liner, Monk and Assister, Magic Swordsman and Mage, and etc.... Of course, the most distinguishable feature of these users was the experience and skill they had gained along the way.

The moment Hyrkan entered the Clapper Jungle's Subjugation Association, he could feel the difference.

Normally, if he entered a Subjugation Association in any castle he went to, most users would show surprise at Hyrkan, who was wearing his Hahoe Mask. Some put on an awed expression as if they had seen a celebrity.

However, it was different here.

“Is it really the Hahoe Mask?”

“A famous person has shown up here. Did he finish his Advancement?”

“We'll know once we see him in action. Anyways, the fact that the Hahoe Mask is here... There must be something interesting here?”

Instead of being surprised at seeing Hyrkan, these users thought about the potential profit they would be able to get their hands on.

Hyrkan received their gazes, and he was able to fully realize the situation he was in.

‘Now I’ll be playing with guys, who really like playing this game..’

An adequate amount of nervousness sharpened Hyrkan's concentration and sharpness. At the same time, Hyrkan quickly turned his head to look at his surrounding. He first looked at the users equipped with the symbolic emblems.

At a glance, one could see several emblems present here. His eyes caught sight of several guild emblems. Hyrkan searched through his memories, and he found out many of them were from fairly famous guilds.

‘There's no one here from the 30 great guilds.’

However, no one was from the 30 great guilds present.

‘I’ll have to go with Plan A.’

In other words, no one from the 30 great guilds had yet to find out about the Baheim Elf Tribes within the Clapper Jungle. Even if the members of those guilds were present, Hyrkan had no plans to trade information with them.

Hyrkan had no choice, but to go with his original idea.

‘I have no choice, but to do all the Quests related to the Clapper Jungle.’

Hyrkan's hardships had just begun.

5.

“Thanks to you the Clapper Jungle will be a bit quieter now.”

Hyrkan put on a forced smile as he heard words spoken by the Clapper Village's NPC.

‘This is the 20th Quest. Please just let me move on. Please...’

This was the 10th day inside the Clapper Jungle.

During the 10 day period, Hyrkan had done all the Quests that was available to him.

Once he started doing all the Quest available in the Clapper Village, he formed a relationship with NPCs. This would lead to the higher rank Quests, and in the end, he hoped he would get the Quest related to the Baheim Elves.

This was the most typical way for a user to get close to a hidden

truth in Warlord.

Of course, people of the world preferred quality over quantity. It was the same for Hyrkan.

“Do you perhaps have anything else for me to do?”

“Mmm. You can go see Chess at the Red Log Cabin. He is trying to acquire Tree Bark Snake's leather.”

Hyrkan's face crumpled.

“Is it perhaps a task that requires gathering of the leathers?”

“The reward will be pretty good.”

[Quest 'Chess' Request' has started.]

When he received the Quest, Hyrkan let out a forced laugh.

‘Shit! I don't want to do this shit!’

Just by hearing the name of the Quest he could tell it was just a monster hunting Quest.

‘I'm going to hit level 100 first if things keep going this way.’

The end to his patience had shown up 3 days ago. When the week was up, Hyrkan finally had to throw out a bait.

He put up a post to trade information. He put up a post saying he wanted information regarding the Elves within the Clapper Jungle.

It was a double-edged sword. He was basically telling other users that Elves existed inside the Clapper Jungle. This was why he hadn't wanted to take this route.

However, at this point, it was more important for him to get information regarding the Baheim Tribe. He couldn't worry about spreading information at this point. He had thrown out a big bait, yet no one was biting.

His anxiety deepened.

‘The Stormhunters have already caught the Helm Ogre.’

It especially made him more restless knowing that the Stormhunters had already left the Parung Forest after catching the Helm Ogre.

It was at that moment.

[A Mail has arrived.]

The mail arrival alarm was heard.

Hyrkan immediately checked the address of the mail. It was a newly made mail address. Someone wanted trade information regarding the Baheim Elf Tribe.

The content was very brief.

[Would like to trade. The location will be in front of the Red Log Cabin.]

Hyrkan's expression unknotted.

‘Finally?’

He had spread the bait 3 days ago, and he had finally gotten a bite. Of course, he had no idea if the person, who bit on the bait was a hustler, trash or a big fish.

First, Hyrkan immediately replied to the mail.

[Tell me about your appearance or distinct features. I'll go

directly to you.]

Another mail came back immediately.

[I will look for you.]

Hyrkan was torn.

‘Is this bastard trying to catch me instead?’

However, his indecision was brief.

‘No. If I reveal myself as the Hahoe Mask, it might give credibility to the bait I put out. I've already spilled the beans about the Elves, and the fact that I'm hunting at the Clapper Jungle isn't a secret.’

Hyrkan didn't want to feel anymore anxiety, so he didn't think too hard on this decision.

Hyrkan decided to make a bold decision.

[Hahoe Mask]

Hyrkan sent another short mail. As he was sending it, he made a firm resolve.

‘If this guy is trying to fish me, his wrist won't stay intact.’

6.

The Red Log Cabin.

A merchant NPC named Chess used this place as his home. He was the NPC that gave out Quests that had gold rewards. He was popular amongst users, who were aiming for the gold reward, instead of the level up. There were about 3-4 users waiting for their turn in front of the Red Log Cabin.

Hyrkan stood a bit away from the other users. Of course, everyone's gaze headed toward Hyrkan.

On the other hand, Hyrkan didn't show any interest to the users. Hyrkan was on high alert, and he surveyed his surrounding.

‘Why is he so late?’

In a flash, he had to determine if the person, who took the bait, was a snake or a big fish. If he confused a snake with a fish, then Hyrkan would be the one being bitten.

This was how the nervous Hyrkan caught sight of an extraordinary user.

‘Uh?’

It was a user with enough fame and reputation to make Hyrkan nervous in an instant. He was famous enough to grab the attention of users, who had been focusing on Hyrkan.

“It's Whistling.”

“Whistling Pitbull!”

Hyrkan's eyes narrowed.

‘Why is the Whistling Pit Bull here?’

Whistling Pitbull.

His appearance looked very similar to a pit bull. His face looked very fierce. Of course, he wasn't famous, because of his ferocious look.

First, he was one of the first to put his name up in the top 100 Ranking Board during the early days of Warlord. He had exceptional abilities, and he also showed a great passion for this game. Of course, his name had long been pushed out from the top

100 Ranking Board by those who devoted their lives to Warlord. Still, his level was still sufficiently high.

‘Currently, Whistling Pit Bull should be in the latter half of level 120 or early 130s?’

He was either at the latter stage of level 120 or he was in the early parts of 130.

It was on par with the level of the highest level users.

In other words, his level was too high to consider the Clapper Jungle as his hunting ground.

He had no reason to be here.

He might have another motive to be here instead of hunting.

‘Perhaps?’

Hyrkan was nervous.

‘Is he here to catch me?’

Didn't Hyrkan have a lot of enemies? It was natural for him to be suspicious. Moreover, he had fought with the Whistling Pitbull before he had returned to the past. Of course, Hyrkan had won.

However, amongst the users he had fought before, the Whistling Pitbull's capabilities and battle sense had left the biggest impression on him.

Moreover, he was part of a large guild that was close to entering the 30 great guilds. He was part of the Fighters Guild.

Of course, Hyrkan would be nervous at his appearance.

Moreover...

‘He's coming towards me.’

He was clearly walking towards Hyrkan. Hyrkan discreetly put his hand into his pocket, and he started touching the Skeleton Fragments. If needed, he thought about doing a pre-emptive attack. At this point in time, Hyrkan hadn't gone through his advancement. It wouldn't be easy to fight Pitbull, who had over 30 levels on him.

The users in the surrounding tensed up.

‘The Whistling Pitbull and the Hahoe Mask are together?’

‘I think a good vid would come out of this?’

Everyone was probably getting ready to record when the two of them started fighting.

Every user in front of the natural looking Red Log Cabin was tense. In this anxious atmosphere, Pitbull stepped in front of Hyrkan. Hyrkan didn't even bother to greet him. The moment he spoke would be the brief window of opportunity Hyrkan needed. He just glared at Pitbull's face through the Hahoe Mask.

However, Pitbull didn't avoid his gaze. As befitting his nickname of Pitbull, his entire face gave off an impression of a fighting dog. His demeanor was very ferocious. If one didn't know him, others might think he was trying to start a fight just from looking at the Pitbull's face.

It was at that moment.

“Maybe.....”

The Pit Bull spoke in a really low voice.

“Can you help me break open this Quest related to the Elves? It is my life's dream to meet the Elves...”

Whistling Pitbull.

He was a man with romantic idea about the Elves.

Chapter 82. The Baheim Tribe (1)

1.

The enormous Trapper Trees rose high into the sky, and the Tree Bark Snakes wrapped around the tree branches. They possessed an incredible camouflage ability, and it was hard to discern them with one's naked eyes.

It used its amazing camouflage skill to stay hidden as it stayed wound around a tree branch. It patiently waited for a prey to travel near it. When the prey appeared, it launched itself towards the ground. Its hunting method could be described as being struck by lightning during a clear day.

Then it happened at this moment.

Choo-roop!

The Tree Bark Snake's knothole-like eyes landed on its preys. The tree branch-like tongue flicked out, and its actions was quite bold. When the preys got within range, the Tree Bark Snake loosened its hold on the branch, and it fell towards the floor.

Kyahhh!

Its mouth opened wide, and the four poisonous fangs gleamed. Its body was 9 meters long, and the sense of presence given off by the large snake was beyond impressive. It was dreadful. Just

thinking about it made one's body shudder.

The two users watched as the dark shadow fell towards them yet they didn't tremble.

Instead, they had calm expressions on their faces. As they watched the snake fall, they started making calculations. They considered where the snake would land, and where they would have to move, if they wanted avoid the snake's attack. They also thought about how long these actions would take, and what was the best method to counter attack.

Of course, it was impossible to calculate all of this in one's head. However, through extensive battle experience, they were able to calculate all of this on instinct.

Ssssook!

The ferocious pitbull looking man raised his right hand, which he held his sword with. He grabbed the sword with both hands.

Ssssook!

The one wearing the Hahoe Mask kept walking.

The man had his two-handed sword raised high over his head, and he looked at the falling Tree Bark Snake. There was still a good distance between the two of them. The poisonous fangs would have a hard time reaching the man, and one would need a prayer

for the sword to reach the snake.

At that moment...

Shweeeee!

The user swung his two handed sword with great power, and it descended as if it was trying to cut the world in half.

Choo-ooong!

The sound of the sword splitting the air was heard, and a blue crescent was sent forth.

Shah shah shah!

The crescent flew at high speeds, and it was letting out a terrifying sound.

This was a Rare Rank Skill that could be learned by fighters over level 120. It was called the Crescent Cut.

It was basically a Sword Qi. This was a skill that was coveted by the users, who chose the Swordsman Class.

It was a very powerful Attack Skill. The cutting force and the attack power was much more powerful than the combined might

of two or three Skills used in succession by a pre-advancement Swordsman Class user.

Moreover, the one who used this skill had a level 120 Unique Weapon equipped, and he was level 131. On the other side, the Tree Bark Snake was only level 105. Also, it had the lowest defense amongst the monsters of similar levels, so its fate was already sealed.

Pooh-hwaht!

It looked as if the snake's head was bisected into two. The Crescent Sword Qi started slicing through the head, and it dissipated after it reached the 1/4 mark of the Snake's body.

Koohng!

The Tree Bark Snake with the bisected head fell to the floor as it let out a crude noise. The sliced body was letting out a slightly translucent liquid that looked like tree sap. It was the snake's blood, but there was no metallic smell. It smelled like wet grass.

Pooh-hwaht, pooh-hwaht!

The snake wasn't dead yet, so it was still moving vigorously. It spread its grass smelling blood everywhere. The single strike had caused critical damage, but the user didn't stop there. He approached the struggling Tree Bark Snake, and he slashed down with his sword again. He was cutting off its life instead of its body.

‘As expected, level is gangster.’

Hahoe Mask Hyrkan suppressed his bitter laugh as he witnessed the sight.

It happened at that moment.

[Your level has risen.]

Hyrkan's ears heard the clear voice. Hyrkan had just received good news, but he suppressed his bitter laughter.

‘I never thought in my life that there would come a day I would ride a bus like this.’

In Hyrkan's head, he thought about his meeting 6 days ago with Whistling.

2.

“I've found a Quest Hint regarding the Elven Tribe within the Crapper Jungle. However, it is impossible to do it with my abilities. I'll give you all the information regarding the Quest if you clear the Quest with me. That's my proposal. ”

Whistling had said his life's dream was to meet the Elves, and he gave Hyrkan the offer he had prepared.

His proposal was very simple, yet it was one-sided.

‘Did I hear him wrong?’

The proposal was too tilted in favor of Hyrkan.

This was why Hyrkan didn't smile from happiness. Instead, he looked back with suspicious eyes.

‘Is Whistling trying to position himself, so he can fuck me over?’

If he found a 100 dollar bill on the floor, he would feel happy. However, if someone came up to him with a thousand dollar check trying to give it to him, he would call the police to check this person out. Hyrkan was clearly the benefactor of this deal.

Wasn't this deal basically giving Hyrkan the Quest Info to meet the Elves for free?

Hyrkan didn't needlessly weigh the merits of the choice inside his head.

“If you want to give me a Game Over, just PK me here. If you want to fuck me over in a different way or if you are trying to

extract information from me, I want you to skip these needless machinations. Just ask me your questions right now, so we can get this over with.”

He couldn't trust Whistling's words!

Hyrkan expressed what he was truly feeling inside. Whistling's face stiffened, and he nodded his head.

“Are you saying you can't trust me? Is that how it is?”

“The only thing I can trust in Warlord is this.”

As he spoke, Hyrkan raised his left hand to show the watch on his wrist. Whistling's face hardened a little bit more.

“I also don't trust you, Hahoe Mask. I only suggested this deal, because I respect your skill. However, I don't plan on surrendering anything else to you.”

Hyrkan let out a short breath when he saw this.

‘Whistling Pit Bull. What kind of a man was he...’

At that moment, Hyrkan worked his not too good head into overdrive. He tried to recall every memory, and information regarding the Whistling Pit Bull. Small anecdotes started popping up in his head.

Hyrkan knew Whistling had been part of the Fighters guild. He was famous, yet there hadn't been much gossips regarding him. Moreover, his reputation decreased as Warlord became more serviced. The reason being Whistling wasn't playing this game to earn big money. It was only a rumor, but it was said that Whistling didn't feel the need to make money, since he was from a well-off family. He had heard this rumor right before he had his one on one battle with Whistling.

Hyrkan recalled Kim-dongsoo had told him that story. At the time, he had thought he couldn't lose to someone, who was born with a golden spoon in his mouth.

‘Yes. Wasn't he a regular member?’

The deciding factor was that fact that Whistling wasn't an officer of the Fighters guild. He was a regular member, and in the end, he continued to be a regular member. This wasn't because the Fighters guild hated Whistling. Whistling was the one, who had kept an appropriate distance from the Fighters guild.

If one became an officer, one had no choice, but to become sensitive to the guild's profit and politics. There were a surprisingly high number of high level users, who just wanted to be regular guild members. They just wanted to do the minimum amount of guild related work, and they wanted only a limited amount of influence in the guild.

‘At the very least, I know he isn't hear to catch me at the request

of Big Smile or some other 30 great guild.'

Hyrkan opened his mouth.

"I'll receive the Quest Info, and we can complete the Quest together. Do you want to just give me the Quest Info?"

"If you need it, I'll help you."

"From my perspective, I have no reason to decline your help. Still, you have a reliable guild called the Fighters behind you. Why are you making this deal with me? You'll be able to finish this more easily if you call on the help of the Fighters guild. I'm really curious about that point."

Whistling thought about it for a brief moment, and he thought Hyrkan's question was reasonable. So he gave his answer.

"Then my nose will be hooked by the guild. They would ask me to do something of equal value to the Quest Clear."

Wasn't it Whistling life long dream to meet the Elves? Then why not play a dating simulation game where an Elf comes out? There were more questions he could have asked. However, Hyrkan didn't question him any further. Didn't one have to respect other's taste? Whistling was basically taking a loss out of his own volition. There was no reason why Hyrkan should agitate someone, who was willing to do that.

“All right.”

He put out his hand instead of blathering on. Whistling grabbed his hand.

3.

After Whistling shook hands with him, he gave Hyrkan the information about the Quest.

“First, you have to finish this 5 particular Quests given by the Clapper Jungle branch of the Subjugation Association.”

The Quest routes Whistling found was convoluted.

“Then you'll be able to have the qualification to receive a quest from a NPC named Rongju.”

First, one had to finish 5 particular Quests given by the Subjugation regarding the Clapper Jungle, then one would gain the qualification to receive a quest from an Adventurer NPC named Rongju. He appeared in two day interval within the Trapper Jungle.

“You have to complete 3 Quests given by Rongju, then you'll be able to talk with a girl NPC, who had been saved by Rongju. Her name is Selene.”

Once one finished the Quests given by Rongju, one will earn the right to talk to Selene. Selene was famous for being the girl of silence.

“Selene knows about the Elves.”

Even if one knew the Quest Route, the content of the Quest Route was quite hard. Moreover, if one had to find out the Quest Route without knowing anything prior to it... Hyrkan was genuinely impressed by Whistling.

‘I thought he was a casual gamer enjoying this game for fun, but he's a madman. If his life's dream is to meet the Elves, couldn't he have played some other game? Why do these insane deeds inside Warlord?’

Of course, this wasn't something worth admiring.

Anyways, Whistling helped Hyrkan with his Quest Progress afterwards. The deal was for Hyrkan to receive the same Quest as Whistling. In the process, Whistling obviously had to catch the monsters for Hyrkan.

Whistling was an expert with level 130 skills, and he possessed a Unique Weapon. The Trapper Jungle was like a playground for him.

Moreover, Whistling had practically lived inside the Trapper Jungle for the Quest Clear, so he was like a nightmare for these

monsters.

'His body knows all of the monster's pattern. At the very least, he's fought over 1000 monsters of each type here.'

Whistling was so amazing that Hyrkan had no choice, but to acknowledge him.

'Even if my Spec and Class was the same as him, Whistling would be better at hunting monsters inside the Trapper Jungle.'

He was better than Hyrkan.

No one would acknowledge it, but it basically meant Whistling was one of the best in Warlord.

'He killed over 1000 useless monsters that was of no help to his level up just to see the Elves. Crazy bastard.'

The more surprising fact was that Whistling was having a hard time raising a single level even after hunting 6 days within the Trapper Jungle. Even now, if he invested himself entirely to leveling up, his level was high enough where he could become one of highest levels. However, he had given up that goal just because he wanted to see the Elves. Hyrkan had started Warlord later than most people, so he couldn't truly comprehend Whistling's reasoning even if Hyrkan played Warlord his whole life.

'In any case, there are a lot of strange bastards in this game. It

seems the crazy to normal ratio increases as one reaches the higher level. There are too many crazy people.'

Warlord didn't have any people of sane mind!

Hyrkan once again felt the full brunt of that truth.

4.

“His skin was so clear that it felt as if it was transparent. If he stood below the Trapper Tree, he would look like a fresh foliage, because of his skin color! He also had very pointy ears, and a beautiful face. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be alive right now. I want to relay my thanks to him. Please give him this letter in my stead.”

[Quest ‘Selene's Letter’ has started.]

Selene's large eyes and freckled face made the young NPC girl a striking figure. After receiving the Quest, Hyrkan immediately checked the content.

[Selene's Request]

- Quest Rank : Rare

- Quest Level Range : At least 90

- Quest Content : Deliver Selene's Letter to the Tribe within the Forest. The hints can be heard through Selene.
- Quest Reward : Biscuit made by Selene's hands.

After checking the Quest Content, Hyrkan talked to Selene.

“Could you tell me where I can find him?”

Selene answered as if she had been waiting for his question.

“I'm having a hard time remembering it. I was being chased by a Tree Bark Snake, and I was chased into a dead end. I had nowhere to run. At that moment, a Rock Elemental appeared, and it protected me. Then he shot an arrow through the snake's head. After killing the Tree Bark Snake, he delivered me to Rongju ahjushi.”

This was all the hint she gave Hyrkan.

Hyrkan came out of Selene's living quarters. As if he had been waiting for Hyrkan, Whistling approached him.

“There are only two hints. There's the dead end road, and the Rock Elemental.”

“I just heard it right now, so I'm well aware of it.”

“When I heard the hint, I looked everywhere that could be described as a dead end road. I looked at every blocked path, cliffs, and even places with big boulders! I searched the Trapper Jungle thoroughly. However, the Event where the Elf shows up never triggered. The Rock Elemental also never appeared. I thought maybe fighting Tree Bark Snakes near a dead end road was the prerequisite to triggering the event. I lured the Tree Bark Snakes to every likely place, yet it didn't trigger the event.”

Whistling finally told Hyrkan the problem he had been facing.

Whistling was well aware of the fact. He knew that he would be taking the biggest loss in the deal he proposed to Hyrkan.

Despite it all, he proposed such a deal, because he was plain frustrated.

“Did I have a choice?”

Moreover, if the person wasn't the Hahoe Mask, he wouldn't have gone out of his way to suggest such a disadvantageous deal.

Hyrkan was known for his incredible battle capability, and he had the ability to clear Quests very well. There was even rumors saying that Hyrkan was ahead of the 30 Great Guilds in the Main Scenario Quest. It wasn't an exaggeration to say Hyrkan's ability to clear Quests was peerless.

From Whistling's perspective, he had lucked out.

“Then there's a high probability that location is the Baekong Falls.”

“What?”

Hyrkan immediately gave an answer. This wasn't hard. Hyrkan already knew where the Baheim Elven Tribe appeared. He just didn't have the qualification to meet them before.

"A waterfall? The event is triggered at a dead-end road. Didn't you hear Selene's hint?"

Since Whistling didn't know what was going through his head, Hyrkan's answer from left field sounded like wishful thinking.

Hyrkan lightly laughed as he looked at Whistling. Then he answered Whistling.

"This place isn't reality. It's a game. Users like us are supermen, who could climb a 100 meter cliff with bare hands. A dead-end road for users of our caliber should be something like a waterfall. Don't you think so?"

In reality, a 2 meter wall was called a dead end. When a 20 meter wall shows up in Warlord, users didn't even think about jumping it. They would think about whether they should break through the wall using their fists or head. This was how users thought in Warlord.

“That's.....”

Of course, they were talking about a native of Warlord, so they couldn't use real world standards here

This was the reason why Whistling hadn't been able to find the answer.

“After level 200, if someone mentions a dead-end road, one should be prepared to jump over laval.”

“Is the Baekong Falls really the event location?”

Whistling repeated the question to Hyrkan. Hyrkan responded to Whistling with thsee words.

“Then do you want to make a bet? I'll put 100 gold on the line that the Baekong Falls is the correct location.”

“Mmm..... All right.”

Hyrkan laughed happily at his answer.

Chapter 83. The Baheim Tribe (2)

5.

It was a winding and endless road. When they followed upstream of a river ending at a lake, they arrived at a cliff. The river was falling off the cliff, and the sound of the water falling was deafening. It was letting out a violent scream.

The two users arrived at the location where the river was letting an endless scream. Hyrkan and Whistling faced each other.

Hyrkan opened his mouth to speak. Whistling also opened his mouth to answer back. However, their voices had no chance against the sound of the waterfall.

Hyrkan shook his head as he closed his mouth, then he tapped lightly on his wrist watch. Whistling also closed his mouth when he saw this, and he nodded his head.

The two of them started touching their wrist watch.

“The sound of the waterfall is immensely wonderful.”

“Is this place the Baekong Falls?”

The conversation between the two finally started.

“We have to pray that we are at the right place or else we would have come here for nothing. Anyways, prepare to give me your 100 gold. You can't back out later on.”

“If I could really meet an Elf in a place like this, I would give you 100 gold. No, I would even give you 1000 gold.”

“Wait a moment. Let me record those words.”

With the incredible sight behind as their background, the two of them held a conversation that didn't have much substance to it. Since it was a trivial conversation, the conversation quickly came to an end. The thick mist of water started to tickle their faces.

‘It really is a dead end.’

The Baekong Falls had a semi-circular shape. Moreover, the stage perfectly fit the description of a dead-end road.

Hyrkan and Whistling stood in front of the dead-end, and they wordlessly looked at the waterfall.

“So do we wait for the Elf to come?”

Whistling was the first one to break the silence.

Instead of answering him, Hyrkan took out the 5 Bone Fragments

from his pocket. He spread it across the floor. Whistling knew what Hyrkan's action meant. Whistling's expression changed, and he quickly looked towards the back.

One had to slightly tilt one's head back against the falling waters to see them. Whistling saw 4 enormous Hook Praying Mantises, and 5 Tree Bark Snakes, which looked like moving logs.

These bastards were so large that they would make a lot of sound if they started moving. However, the sound of the waterfall had drowned out the sound of the monsters. This was why Hyrkan and Whistling hadn't been able to sense them.

It was as simple as that. They hadn't been aware of monsters' presence.

“Bone Armor.”

Hyrkan's summoned Skeleton Warriors were equipped with armor. Gloves, chest armors, greaves and even shoulder armors were put on!

The white armor made it look as if the Skeleton Warriors had swollen in size. At the same time, a horn appeared on the Skeleton Warrior's head.

After putting on the Madness Helm, the Skeleton Warriors opened their mouth wide, and they aggressively expressed their violent nature. As if it was answering the call of the Madness of the

Skeleton Warriors, the swords grasped by the Skeleton Warriors let out a blue light.

Hyrkan gave the attack order.

The Skeleton Warriors immediately split in five directions, and they charge without reserve towards the monsters.

During all of this, Hyrkan had taken out a gem from his pouch. The gem in his hand was used to summon the Golem. The gem within Hyrkan's hand melted, and it dripped onto the floor.

Koo koo koo!

A muscular, one-eyed giant with a hammer appeared out of the uneven ground.

Cyclops.

Cyclops had a very ferocious nature, and the Golem had inherited its nature. It no longer had its dull appearance. The Golem immediately charged towards the monsters.

Koong, koong, koong!

The 6 meter tall giant made out of dirt caused the ground to ring out as it moved.

Hoo-ooong, kwahng!

The giant swung down with its hammer, and it created a crater. A part of the Tree Bark Snake's body was hit with the hammer, and it flattened like a sheet of paper.

Kyahhhh!

Of course, the monsters responded by counterattacking.

Five Skeletons, one Golem, and nine monsters became tangled with each other, and it created a mess.

It was only then did Hyrkan and Whistling move. The bedlam was their playground.

The Hook Praying Mantis swung tirelessly as it tried to catch the Skeleton Warriors. Hyrkan climbed the Mantis' body. Hyrkan stabbed at a location where the exoskeleton was thin.

Whistling put an appropriate distance between him and the monsters. He performed his Crescent Cut to chop the monsters into pieces.

The 9 monsters were down to below half of its numbers before 3 minutes were up.

In a flash, there were only two left.

‘Let's see which one I... Ah!’

At that moment, Hyrkan let out a yell.

“Leave one of them alone!”

The moment Hyrkan's words ended Whistling swung his sword to take off the head of the Hook Praying Mantis.

“What?”

Hyrkan immediately answered Whistling's question.

“We have to re-enact the situation.”

Hyrkan flicked his finger as he spoke. The Skeleton Warriors, who had been moving in an agile manner, immediately lowered into their defensive stance. They shifted into defense mode. The last surviving Tree Bark Snake lashed out with its tail like a whip. The tail strike hit a Skeleton Warrior, and it was flung away as its body disintegrated.

Hyrkan twisted one corner of his mouth as he watched his Magic decrease.

‘Chet.’

It put him in a foul mood, but he had no choice.

NPC Selene said an Elf saved her when she was in trouble. Then they would have to recreate a similar scenario.

“All right.”

Whistling understood what Hyrkan was talking about, so he put away his sword into its sheathe.

All of Hyrkan's summoned underlings went into being Fragments, or the Golem returned to the earth.

The chaos lessened and Tree Bark Snake was alone by itself. It continued its wild movements.

Hyrkan and Whistling took turns to avoid its attack.

However, this continued on for a while.

‘It's already been about 3 minutes.’

A not too short amount of time had flowed by, but they didn't see any signs of change. Hyrkan looked at his surrounding, and he started feeling a bit anxious.

‘It has to come out.’

There was a reason why Hyrkan was feeling anxious.

‘A thousand gold is on the line. The Elves have to come out!’

It was a trivial reason.

It was at that moment.

Kyahn!

The Tree Bark Snake let out a coarse sound, and its tail whipped against Whistling. When Hyrkan saw this, he involuntarily winced.

‘Why?’

Whistling was the Trapper Jungle's greatest gosu. It was a fact that Hyrkan had acknowledged. His battle ability was better than Hyrkan inside the Trapper Jungle. Yet he suffered an attack from a simple tail strike from a Tree Bark Snake? It seemed almost impossible.

However, it happened. Whistling suffered an attack from the tail attack!

‘Ah.’

He baited the attack.

He purposely got hit, so it would look like he was in trouble. Hyrkan realized his own mistake.

‘Crazy bastard.’

Whistling was a Striker Type. This was why he was able to Advance as a Fighter. No matter how good a defensive gear one had on, it was still burdensome to take the full brunt of an attack from a monster.

Of course, he wouldn't die.

Still, unless he had a very particular fetish, no human or users liked being hit.

Fortunately, Whistling's sacrifice paid off.

Pooh-hooh!

From beneath the lake located below the waterfall, a Golem made out of enormous boulders appeared.

The Boulder Golem headed immediately towards the Tree Bark

Snake, and an arrow appeared out of nowhere to pierce deeply into the body of the Tree Bark Snake. That arrow was the first of many arrows.

Kyah, kyah!

The Tree Bark Snake started to struggle. Hyrkan and Whistling smiled as they looked at the monster.

‘If I came here alone, I would have never been able to meet the Elven Tribe.’

Whistling and Hyrkan nodded to each other.

Then the Elves, who they had been yearning for, appeared in front of them.

6.

Their skin could be described as pure instead of pale. There was a very slight green tinge to their skin, and it was overflowing with a feeling of refreshment.

Their features were delicate. It was as if they had been drawn with the end of a thin brush. However, they didn't look frail. They gave off an air of sophistication.

Their large eyes held the color of emerald, and a high nose gave off a sense of arrogance. Their face was small compared to their high nose, and the combined effect of the features gave off a sense of aloofness. Their pale lips had a delicateness that seemed to have been made for an art piece.

When one saw them, one couldn't help but show appreciation regarding their unforgettable beauty. Moreover, the Elves had cosmetics applied to their faces. Instead of it giving off a dry feeling, their appearance was filled with a sense of refreshment.

The delicate scent of evergreen was coming off their body.

“Who are you guys?”

A pure voice flowed out of the Elf's mouth. However, her voice was buried by the sound of the falling waterfall.

This was why Hyrkan and Whistling looked at each other without saying anything. No matter what the Elf said, they didn't have the ability to hear what the Elf had said.

Of course, Hyrkan was the first one to react as he picked up what was going on. Hyrkan looked over the Elf's face, and he put on a slightly sour face.

‘Somehow I get a leery feeling when I see pretty people.’

It wasn't as if Hyrkan hated beauties. Of course, no one in the

world hated beautiful people. It was weird, but the sense of distrust came up before the feeling of admiration. He wouldn't put the beauties before his work. In Hyrkan's experience, it was rare for him to have a normal encounter with beautiful women. Moreover, the worst insult in his life was given as present to Hyrkan by a beautiful woman.

This was why the Elven Race's beauty made Hyrkan put up his guard.

On the other hand, Whistling looked at the Elf in front of him with an absent-minded face. He kept staring at the Elf. Hyrkan nudged Whistling's side with his elbow.

“Didn't you say this was your life's dream?”

“Ah!”

Whistling finally realized what was going on, so he started walking towards the Elf. He still had a dazed expression on his face, so the Elf took couple step backwards in surprise.

Gwahhhhhk!

As she took several steps backwards, she quickly pulled her bow back. There didn't seem to be an arrow loaded, but one could tell something transparent was notched.

“Hey, stop!”

Hyrkan spoke out, and those words made Whistling alert once again. The Elf warned Whistling once again.

“Please reveal your identity to us.”

They still couldn't hear her, because of the sound of the waterfall. Whistling rolled his eyes around as he tried to guess what was going on. Then he opened his mouth.

“I'm Adventurer Whistling. I'm an Adventurer... The child you saved sent this letter.”

Whistling tried to take out Selene's Letter, which he had safely put away within his pocket. It was a funny sight to see a large human awkwardly try to take out the letter.

The Elf once again pulled back on her bow. She thought Whistling was taking out a weapon. Whistling quickly took out his hand in fright to show that both his hands were empty of weapons. Then he unbuckled his sword from his waist, and he placed it on the floor. Afterwards, he was able to take out the letter. He placed the letter on the floor, and he retreated backward with both his hands raised.

Hyrkan snorted as he saw this sight live.

‘Jeez. Are they trying to make a movie?’

A character unarming themselves to show that he didn't hold any hostile intent towards the natives was a scene commonly seen inside movies. However, he never expect to see such a sight within the game. Hyrkan tried very hard to stop himself from ridiculing them.

At that moment, the Elf started to aim the bow towards Hyrkan. It basically meant she wanted Hyrkan to backoff like Whistling. Hyrkan had an annoyed expression as he raised both his hands up high towards the sky. There was no need to make it more difficult here.

When Hyrkan and Whistling backed off a sufficient distance, the Elf relaxed slightly and she picked up the letter. Before she read the letter, she brought the letter up to her nose and she sniffed it.

“So you received a request from that child.”

Before she read the letter, the Elf had already discerned the content of the letter. She let out a long whistle.

The hidden Elves started to show themselves one or two at a time.

“Since you've seen us, we can't just send you back like this. We'll guide you to our village.”

Those words were still not registering with Hyrkan and Whistling.

Instead...

[You've completed the Quest 'Selene's Letter.]

[You've earned the Title 'A Person who Encounter the Elves'.]

The system announcement informed Hyrkan and Whistling of the situation.

7.

Five Elves surrounded Whistling and Hyrkan. They continued to wander around near the Baekong Falls.

During this time, the two of them shared a conversation.

“Wasn't I right? I told you they were at the Baekong Falls. Since your life long dream has been fulfilled, you can't go back on your words. At the end of this, you have to give me the gold.”

As Hyrkan spoke, Whistling was still looking at the surrounding Elves with a dazed expression. It wasn't the simple case of being dazed by beauty. He looked as if he had been hypnotized by something.

Hyrkan shook his head from side to side as he looked at Whistling's expression.

‘He isn't like the Pit Bull I knew from before. He fell into that category of people?’

Whistling Pitbull.

He was nicknamed the Pit Bull, because of his outer appearance. However, as befitting his nickname, he possessed the tenaciousness of a fighting dog.

He was decisive.

He saw the battle to the end without sparing his body. He was like a cool hunting dog that never gave up once he entered the battlefield. However, the current Whistling looked nothing like a pit bull. He didn't even give off a feeling of pet dog.

“Do you really like the Elves that much?”

Hyrkan finally asked the question. It was a question he had avoided asking until now. He had no reason to ask it. Hyrkan didn't care about other people's preferences.

Hyrkan had already given up finding a teammate. He only had two categories. A person fell into either the profitable or non-

profitable category. If the person could lead Hyrkan to a profit, he didn't care if the person preferred Dwarfs instead of Elves. He would be able to overlook their taste. He could even overlook a person liking the Orcs. He would have to think long and hard though if someone's preference ran towards the Trolls.

At Hyrkan's question, Whistling slowly opened his mouth.

“Of course. I really like them. It was one of the main reason why I started playing this game.”

“I guess you like beautiful women.”

“What man doesn't like beautiful women? However, it isn't as simple as that.”

“You have another reason?”

“I have a great admiration towards the Fantasy genre.”

“What?”

After he thought about it for a moment, Whistling told Hyrkan the reason he had told no one before.

It was a gift, since Hyrkan had helped him out.

“Warlord is a game. I won't deny that fact. However, amongst all the games out in the market, it had a setting that was closest to a Fantasy world. It was my life long dream to meet the Elves in such a world. To me, Elves are symbol that epitomizes the Fantasy genre.”

“Is that so?”

“Now that I've met the Elves, I think I will truly be able to enjoy this world. Moreover, it feels like I could give it my all in playing Warlord now.”

Whistling grinned.

“Isn't everyone playing this game for those reasons?”

At those words, Hyrkan recalled someone.

‘He's a guy that likes the challenge itself.’

Don Quixote.

He was a challenger, who lived for the chivalric romances.

Whistling was cut from the same cloth. At that moment, Hyrkan knew it for sure.

‘There's no way I'll become teammates with Whistling.’

He couldn't become comrades with Pit Bull. Hyrkan was on the complete other side of the spectrum with those who were playing this game out of enjoyment and romanticism.

“We've arrived.”

At that moment, the barrier in front of Whistling and Hyrkan was taken down. Then the hidden Baheim tribe's village inside the Clapper Jungle appeared. There were countless bridges connecting the Clapper Trees, and houses hanging off of trees. The sight filled Hyrkan's vision.

[You've received the title 'Baheim Tribe's First Customer'.]

He immediately heard the announcement for the Title.

When Hyrkan heard the announcement, he patted Whistling's shoulder.

“All right. You should have fun playing this game.”

He realized not too long ago that he couldn't become teammates with Pit Bull. If that's the case, they would have to part ways here.

“What?”

Whistling spat out a reply at Hyrkan's abrupt words. However, Hyrkan ignored Whistling's question, and he spoke toward the Elf on the side.

“I'm here on an errand for the blacksmith Olf. I would appreciate it if you could take me to someone in charge of this place.”

Chapter 84. The Baheim Tribe (3)

8.

Thick vines were interconnected between the large trees, and the Elves were walking across the vines at a quick pace. Unlike walking a tightrope, one didn't feel a sense of danger. It felt as if they were children playing jump rope. The sight evoked a feeling of wonder.

The Elves, who had created such a surprising sight, all twitched their ears at the same time as if they had promised to do so beforehand.

The Elves' emerald eyes headed toward a single location like arrows.

Their gazes landed on Hyrkan and the single Elf that was guiding him.

Chubuhk, chubuhk.

Unlike the Elves traveling across the vines, Hyrkan and the Elf was walking on land. The sound of their steps sounded unusually loud. Their steps stopped under a particular tree.

“Take this.”

The Elf that had guided Hyrkan suddenly gave him a thick and

tough vine. Hyrkan took the vine, and he raised his gaze. His eyes followed the line, and he saw a house at the end of it. The house wasn't made by cutting parts of the tree. The house was made out of already broken parts of tree.

It wasn't tidy, nor was it shabby. Instead, there was a sense of mystique that permeated the house. If one saw it for the first time, the sense of mystique would have made him fall into a trance.

‘This is all bullshit.’

However, Hyrkan wasn't dazed. The sense of mysticism worked only on someone, who saw this for the first time.

“Climb up.”

At the Elf's word, Hyrkan started quickly climbing up the vine before the Elf could gesture towards it. He didn't need to use his feet. He used only his arms, and he went up as if he was sprinting a short distance.

The Elf glared at Hyrkan from below. The Elf's gaze was filled with vigilance and hostility. It made the bottom of Hyrkan's feet turn cold. Hyrkan glanced below then he put on a mocking smile.

‘As I suspected, I don't mix well with handsome or pretty people.’

He was once again awakened to the unpleasant reality, when Hyrkan reached the tree house's floor. The tree house's door was

located on the floor. It was a round door, and it had a diameter of around 1 meter. It was a little bit larger than a manhole cover.

Ddok ddok!

Hyrkan knocked on the door over his head as he dangled from the vine. The door opened, and a face could be seen across the dark space.

He had a youthful appearance. If Hyrkan had to guess his age using normal human standards, he would have to put the man in his 30s. However, his beautiful appearance was the most striking one he had seen amongst the Elves. There was a large scar made by a knife above the bridge of his nose, and at the end of the scar, there was another scar that looked as if a tip of an arrow had punctured that location. From afar, it looked as if someone had drawn an exclamation point on his face. Instead of it looking hideous, the scar made him look look more stylish and cool.

‘The exclamation scar... So, this guy is Drah.’

NPC Drah.

He was Baheim tribe's chieftain. Amongst the Elf enthusiasts within Warlord, he was quite popular. He was always within the top 5 of every popularity poll regarding the male Elves of Warlord. Hyrkan always disparaged the poll result, and he considered people who casted the vote to be crazy. He even yell out, 'Do they have nothing better to do?', once.

Hyrkan raised his hand towards the Chieftain Drah. He was asking for a handshake.

However, Chieftain Drah just stared at the hand offered by Hyrkan. 1 second, 2 second, 3 second..... After 10 seconds had passed, Chieftain Drah spoke before he took the hand.

“So you are the person sent by Olf-nim.”

If it wasn't the Secret Society Ring, chieftain Drah would have kicked Hyrkan to drop him to his death.

Chieftain Drah shook Hyrkan's hand only after saying those word. Only then was Hyrkan allowed to see the inside of Chieftain Drah's house.

‘This is the first time I've come into an Elf's home. I've only seen it through footages.’

Hyrkan turned his head. He wanted to see his surrounding, and at the same time, he wanted to film everything. Hyrkan looked everywhere.

The most eye-catching part was the ceiling. The ceiling had small holes where water couldn't pass through, but the light and wind could filter through. He let out a sound as he looked at the cloth making up the ceiling.

‘Elf Silk.’

If used to make a defensive gear, it had pretty good defense and it was light. Moreover, Elf Silk had Attribute Resistance.

Overall, the room was dark. The small room had furnitures made from broken or rotten wood. It was vaguely shaped like furnitures, since the wood wasn't cut from trees.

“Sit.”

Hyrkan sat in a simple chair. He wouldn't have been surprised if the chair collapsed on itself at any moment.

The story line started immediately.

“Did you bring it?”

“Yes.”

Hyrkan immediately took out the pouch from a secure location on his body, then he gave it to Chieftain Drah.

[Quest 'Olf's Errand' is complete.]

“Mmmm!”

After receiving the pouch, Chieftain Drah immediately opened it, and he place the content on the top of his palm.

Soo-roo-roo!

A silver colored liquid that looked like mercury fell on top of Chieftain Drah's palm. After it fell, it immediately started to move as if it was alive. Soon, it looked like a circlet one could wear on one's head.

Hyrkan's eyes shined.

‘It's the Circlet of Purification.’

Circlet of Purification.

It was from a mystical pond that was able to purify anything. The circlet was made using silver excavated from the bottom of the Pond of Purification.

Once equipped it had the Option of giving immunity towards all abnormal statuses. It had the unlimited ability to dispel the Curse Skills, and the Debuff Skills.

It was an incredible item.

‘I can buy beef with that. No, I can buy a whole cow if I had that

item.'

One could directly acquire the silver from the Pond of Purification to make the, but the Pond of Purification was a special location that had to be found at the same time as a special Boss monster. It was very hard to find the Boss and the location. Moreover, the amount of silver one could excavate was random. One had to be very lucky to have enough to make a Circlet of Purification from the Pond of Purification.

At this point in the game, he could get whatever he wanted in terms of price. It might be worth several more times its weight in gold.

'I know for sure there is a Circlet of Purification given during the Immoral Prince part of the Quest.'

Moreover, the current Main Scenario Quest might be the one that gives the Circlet of Purification as a reward.

Hyrkan gulped.

While he was thinking this, Chieftain Drah confirmed it was the Circlet of Purification, then he immediately put it back into the pouch. When the hard circlet touched the pouch, it turned into liquid, and it was sucked back into the pouch.

"Thank you."

This was the first time Hyrkan had received a word of thanks from Chieftain Drah.

“It was nothing.”

“You probably went through a lot of hardship to get here.”

“I'm on Olf-nim's errand. It is proper for me to go through all of this.”

When Hyrkan's words ended, Chieftain Drah's expression slightly improved.

‘Is this the end?’

Chieftain Drah wordlessly looked at Hyrkan. His disinterested eyes seemed to say, 'Your work here is done, so why aren't you leaving?'

‘This isn't how it's suppose to play out.’

Hyrkan hesitated for a moment.

‘Isn't he suppose to give me the Corrupted Elf Quest? I'm sure of it.’

This was the reason why the blacksmith Olf had given the Circlet

of Purification to the Baheim Elf tribe. An Elf from the Baheim tribe had become drunk on the power of Corruption, and he had betrayed the Baheim tribe. One had to catch the Corrupted Elf, and the power of Corruption had to be purified from the Elf.

Chieftain Drah was supposed to explain this to Hyrkan, then he was suppose to give the Quest to capture the Corrupt Elf to Hyrkan. However, he just kept staring at Hyrkan. Chieftain Drah seemed determined to make Hyrkan the most shameless human.

Eventually Hyrkan opened his mouth.

“Do you perhaps have anything that needs my help? Olf-nim instructed me to help with anything the Baheim tribe needed. That was what he said.”

Of course, Olf hadn't said those words. The situation was desperate enough that he betrayed Olf.

Chieftain Drah answered Hyrkan's question without putting much thought into his words.

“I'm just thankful you came all the way here for an errand. I don't want to give you a task that is beyond your capability.”

He got his answer.

‘Shit!’

This was the worst case scenario for Hyrkan.

‘I got caught in the level restriction.’

He hadn't reached a level where he would be able to carry out the Quest.

Most Main Scenario Quests didn't have a level restriction. It was intended as an invitation for the unqualified people to participate in the Quests.

Still, there had to be a cut-off point.

The first episode of the Corrupt Count was a Main Scenario Quest for the users between level 1-100. The second episode of the Immoral Prince was for users between level 100-200. Of course, the third part of the Quest was for users between level 200-300. The difficulty of the Quests were set with this in mind.

Basically, Hyrkan was progressing through the Immoral Prince part of the Main Scenario Quest right now. The difficulty was set with users over level 100 in mind.

However, Hyrkan's current level was 96.

‘I knew this day would come.’

He had been worried about this. This had been a likely scenario. However, he never expected his worries to turn into reality at this juncture. In a way, this happened because Hyrkan was too amazing. He had basically exceeded the game's standard by a significant amount.

‘I guess I have to get to level 100 now?’

There was only one way to resolve this problem.

He had to level up.

‘I have 4 levels to go. I've already somewhat filled my EXP, so I have to raise it only by 3.5 level. So it'll probably take me 10 days even if I rush it?’

He had no choice.

If he wanted to quickly progress in his Quest, he had to raise his level. There was no other answers except for this.

The answer was clear. He was annoyed, but he didn't think too long on it.

‘I can reach level 100 here. I have enough consumables. I'll just level up here then I'll receive the Quest. Afterwards, I can go to a castle with a Class Tower for my advancement. Then I'll use all the money I have to get a level 100 Item.’

After he finished his thoughts, Hyrkan got up from his seat.

“I'll see you again next time.”

9.

The moment Whistling saw Hyrkan, he called after him.

“Did everything work out?”

Hyrkan answered in a brusque manner.

“No.”

“I guess a problem cropped up. Anyways, I saw you were conducting a quest involving the Elves. That's amazing. I never expected the Hahoe Mask to move along a Quest so quickly. I stayed here with a do or die attitude, but I haven't received a quest yet. ”

Hyrkan discreetly glanced at Whistling..

“.....I know you won't do it, but don't spread any unnecessary information. If this truth became well known, there is no way the other users will leave me alone.”

Whistling smiled. He had a terrifying smile on his face. Whistling wanted Hyrkan to trust him, and he tried to put that intent behind his smile. However, it caused Hyrkan to feel uneasy.

This time Hyrkan was the one to reply first.

“What about you? Since you've achieved your life's wish, what do you plan on doing next?”

“I'll continue doing all the Quests available to me by the Baheim tribe. I'll increase their affinity towards me one step at a time. I'll work towards finding more quests. My immediate goal is to make a Quest Map.”

Hyrkan had never seen Whistling with such an expression of anticipation before.

This was something Whistling really wanted to do.

‘So that's the reason why...’

Hyrkan realized how Whistling had become an old hat before Hyrkan returned to the past.

‘This is the reason why he is behind the others.’

Whistling really enjoyed playing this game. Instead of the Rankings, he put more importance on the fantasy experience that

could be given by the game of Warlord.

“All right. I wish you success.”

Even if he killed hundreds or thousand monsters nearby, Whistling wouldn't be able to level up!he decided not to point out such jaded and reality-based words. He firmly closed his mouth.

Moreover, he wouldn't give any warning or advice. Whistling had made a different choice from him, and it wasn't the wrong choice.

“How about you? Can you tell me what you will be doing in the immediate future?”

“I'll be trying to reach level 100.”

“Is that so?”

At that moment, Whistling took out gold coins from his pocket, and he handed it to Hyrkan. Hyrkan's expression changed.

‘Oh yes!’

Of course, this was the winnings from their bet. Hyrkan quickly took the coins, and he started to count the coins.

‘Huh?’

Hyrkan's expression crumpled.

“Hey. Isn't this only 10 gold? I thought you were going to give me 100 gold?”

Whistling grinned at those words.

“Thankfully, you aren't asking for 1000 gold.”

“Since you remember those words, I guess I'll have to collect on the 1000 gold. When are you going to give me the 990 gold?”

“That's the only amount I can give you.”

Hyrkan's expression hardened.

‘Is he playing with me?’

He was always meticulous with his calculations. The 90 gold wasn't something that could be easily ignored. Also, it was a money that fell out of the sky. With that money, he could purchase a 1 month supply of ramen.

“If you sold the sword equipped on your waist, can't you pay that amount a thousand times over?”

“That's the only gold I have on me.”

“Then perhap....”

“I'll work off the rest of the money. What if I do a task that is worth 90 gold? I'll help you level up.”

Those words...

It was such shocking words, since it was words that Hyrkan would never say to someone else. It took him awhile to understand what Whistling was saying. It took him a long time.

“Uh?”

He finally understood what Whistling was getting at.

“So you are going to let me ride the bus?”

Hyrkan was shocked.

He had gone through all kinds of hardship in Warlord, and he had experienced all kinds of wars here. However, this was the most surprise he had felt in Warlord.

10.

[Your level has increased.]

[You have earned the title 'Expert'.]

[You've obtained the title 'Necromancer'.]

[A strong power is roiling within your body.]

When he leveled up, Hyrkan didn't share a moment of happiness with Whistling, who was nearby. With a stiff expression, Whistling tapped the shocked Hyrkan on the shoulder twice.

“That should be enough, right? I'm going. If there is an opportunity, let's meet up again at a later date. At that time... I'll have to receive something from you.”

With those words, Whistling got ready to log out. Hyrkan tilted his head back in thought as he looked at Whistling.

‘Wow. I hit level 100 in 8 days. I never thought such a feat was possible.’

With the help of Whistling, Hyrkan was able to focus on his hunt to level up.

During all of this, a level 130+ expert had given up any thoughts about leveling himself, and he wholeheartedly acted as a helper.

The result had exceeded Hyrkan's every imagination.

He had done something in 8 days that would have normally taken 10 days. If it took 10 seconds to run 100 meter, he had basically decreased the time to 8 seconds. It was an incredible feat.

He had a weird feeling as he saw the presence of Whistling fading away.

He was cool, obstinate and amazing. He wondered if he could game like that... Several feelings coalesced inside his chest.

Those feelings...

Koong koong!

Hyrkan pounded his chest with his hand to break it up.

‘That kind of romanticism is a luxury to me.’

Moreover, Whistling was Don Quixote.

If he could game for pleasure, he would want to play like it like Whistling. Sometimes he wanted to game without any worries or concerns. Moreover, if he wanted to, he could choose not to be like this.

However, Hyrkan had chosen a different path.

‘That isn't what I need.’

Hyrkan started walking.

11.

“The child is drunk on the power of Corruption. There is only rage and blind faith left in him. The child is desperately trying to Corrupt our race. It is the duty of our tribe to catch him.”

Hyrkan nodded his head at Chieftain Drah's words.

“However, our tribe cannot easily leave our territory. Originally, one of our tribe members has to complete this task. However, you have the trust of Olf-nim, and we trust him. This is why we will leave this task to you.”

[You've obtained the title 'Friend of the Elves'.]

[You obtained the title 'Member of the Baheim Tribe'.]

He gained two titles.

The announcement for the title didn't ring in Hyrkan's ears. He

was focused on what Chieftain Drah was saying.

“You have to track down the child, and you have to confirm the truth through the child. I hope you will fight against the power of Corruption for the tribe and the Society.”

[The Quest 'Fallen Elf' has started.]

After saying this, Chieftain Drah handed him the pouch. It was the pouch Hyrkan had given him in the first place.

“The Circlet of Purification is in there. It is a mystical item that corrects any abnormal statuses. If you bind the child with this item, you will be washing away his Corruption. If the Corruption is washed away, he will tell you the truth..”

At this juncture, Hyrkan's expression brightened.

‘Are they perhaps giving me the Circlet of Purification? Is it the Quest Reward? Is this for real?’

His very dim expectation was suddenly about to become reality. It felt like buying a lottery ticket with one's pocket money by chance, and a large sum of money had been won through the lotto. However, this feeling didn't last long.

“You can't lose the Circlet within that pouch. If you lose it, you'll

pay a hefty price.”

Since this hadn't been given to you, don't you dare sell it!

The warning basically held that meaning behind it.

Hyrkan's expression became sullen.

‘I should have guessed. They wouldn't give this item as a Quest Reward at this juncture. It probably has the option blocking users from wearing it.’

After speaking his words, Chieftain Drah looked at Hyrkan. Hyrkan looked back with a sullen expression. 1 second, 2 second.... The silence continued.

It was at that moment he opened his mouth.

“That's it?”

“That's it.”

“You don't have anything else to say to me?”

“Nope.”

“You really don't have anything to say to me?”

“Nope. I want you to leave if you don't have any other business with me.”

At that moment, Hyrkan's expression crumpled.

‘Is this really it? I don't even know the exact location of the Corrupted Elf. At the very least, don't they have to tell me a direction?’

This was an unexpected situation.

‘This is crazy. What kind of game quest is so open ended like this?’

As expected, Hyrkan wasn't compatible with beautiful men or women.

Chapter 85. Deal With The Redbulls (1)

1.

[Hyrkan]

- Level : 100
 - Class : Necromancer
 - Stats : Strength(991)/Stamina(445)/Intelligence(658)/Magic Powers(755)
-

[Skill List]

- Summon
 - [Skeleton Fragment(A)], [Madness Helm(B)], [Bone Armor(B)], [Skeleton Magician(B)], [Skeleton Science(C)], [Golem Summon(B)], [Hardening(D)], [Bone Explosive(C)], [Armament(D)], [Clay Play(E)], [Skeleton Knight(F)]
- Curse
 - [Demon Curse(B)], [Slow Curse(C)], [Corrosive Ghost(C)], [Blind(D)], [Curse Science(E)], [Lethargy(F)]
- Body Strengthening
 - [Skin Sewing(C)], [Leg Strength Modification(C)], [Fake Heart(D)], [Boiling Blood(E)]

Ahn-jaehyun checked his character's Stats and Skills through the Tablet PC, then he checked his youtube page. The number of people subscribed to his page had broken through the half million mark. His recent footages weren't all jackpots, but they showed a steady rate of growth in views. Moreover, there were too many comments below the reply button, so it was hard to go through them all.

Lastly, Ahn-jaehyun checked the summary of his bank account. He had been overwhelmed by the overflowing numbers before, but the numbers that came into his sight was quite poor. The amount of money he had was less than the number of subscribed viewers on his youtube page.

The moment he saw those numbers Ahn-jaehyun let out a long sigh.

“Uh-whew!”

The moment he became level 100 the first thing he did was to go through his Advancement. His character's class was finally changed from Magician to Necromancer. With his Advancement, his Stats had grown a lot. He also gained the Skeleton Knight Skill he had wanted so bad.

Afterwards, he gathered as much funds as he could, then he purchased the level 100 Items.

‘Whatever I earned had been squeezed out.’

Clear Spider Set and Golden Mantis' Scythe Sword.

Both were incredible items.

The Clear Spider set was made from Clear Spider's webs. It was so popular amongst the level 100 users that it picked up the nickname Ferrari. It was a very good defensive set. Since it was made out of spider webs, one couldn't feel its weight, yet its defense was superior to sets made out of steel. Its basic Stat Options were unparalleled amongst the Rare Items of the same rank.

On top of that, when one wore the whole set, it activated extra defense, increased movement speed, self-regeneration, and Stat increase options. All of them were quite valuable.

The Golden Mantis' Scythe Sword was top 5 in attack amongst the level 100 Unique Rank weapon Items. It was a very powerful sword. The ancillary options were worse than the regular Unique Items. However, the weapon had such a high attack that the other deficiencies could be ignored.

Ahn-jaehyun had to empty most of the money he had saved tenaciously to buy these two items.

The leftover money was used to buy new ingredients for the Skeleton Fragments, Golem ingredient gem, and consumable items. He had used all of his money. He didn't have a single gold to his name now.

If he told this truth to the people around him, they probably would have treated Ahn-jaehyun like a madman.

Ahn-jaehyun felt it himself.

‘I spent an incredible amount of money.’

The currency he spent wasn't just gold. He had spent hard cash, so Ahn-jaehyun shut his eyes tight as he calculated.

He really did spend a lot of money.

‘My preparation was perfect.’

On the other hand, Ahn-jaehyun felt a sense of confidence now. The fact that he had invested his money into Warlord meant he was that much stronger now. He had spent a lot, so that meant Ahn-jaehyun had become powerful.

No matter what stage he went to right now he was confident that he would be able to pull his own weight. If need be, he was confident he could eradicate the Black Hounds from the great Urugal mountain range.

‘I was perfect in my preparation. Perfect, but.....’

The problem was...

“Where the hell do I find the Corrupted Elf?”

He was all set, but he had no idea what to do now. He didn't even have a direction he could go towards.

He searched his memory about the content of the Corrupted Elf Quest. Ahn-jaehyun started massaging his temple with his hands.

‘So this is what it meant when they said it was random.’

Amongst the Immoral Prince episode, the Corrupted Elf Quest was one of the more important Quests. This was the reason why Ahn-jaehyun knew that the Baheim Elf Tribe was near the Baekong Falls inside the Clapper Jungle.

Moreover, if Ahn-jaehyun followed the thread of his memory, he remembered the location of the Corrupted Elf was chosen at random. He was sure of it. When they said random, Ahn-jaehyun thought the location would be set when he received the Quest. The game would choose one cardinal point of either north, south, east or west.

‘How can it be random to this extent?’

He would have never guessed the true meaning behind the word 'random'.

‘I want to see the guy who came up with this game..’

“Uh-whew!”

Ahn-jaehyun once again let out a sigh.

Fortunately, Ahn-jaehyun was well acquainted with the macro view of the Immoral Prince episode of the Main Scenario Quest.

‘Let's think this through slowly, Ahn-jaehyun. There must be a clue here.’

This was also why Ahn-jaehyun knew what role the Corrupted Elf played in the Quest.

‘Wasn't it the Corrupted Elf's role to train the Corrupt army?’

The role of the Corrupted Elf was to hide in forests and nurture the rebel force that'll help the Immoral Prince take over the throne!

The Helm Ogre killed by Ahn-jaehyun was a part of this plan.

It was a clue.

‘In Warlord events, Corrupted Monsters makes an appearance sometimes, so there must be a connection with the Corrupted Elf.’

When a monster was suddenly exposed to the power of Corruption, it will show up as an Event Monster armed with weapon, and it possessed black eyes. There was a high chance that the Corrupted Elf was there.

Basically, he would have to gather information on where and when all the Corrupted Monsters had shown up. If he could analyze those datas, he would be able to plot the route taken by Corrupted Elf. He would be able to find its location.

‘It isn't as if there isn't a method.’

The gist of his idea was to gather information, then he would have to analyze the information. If one could do that, anyone would be able to find the Corrupt Elf. For example, if one prepared and reviewed for the entrance test thoroughly, one would be able to get into the Seoul University. However, anyone else who studied hard could also get in. If he tried hard, would he be able to gather both the information and analyze it?

“Shit.”

It meant Ahn-jaehyun couldn't do it alone.

In the first place, the Main Scenario Quest wasn't made so a single person could complete it. Numerous users had to pool together information. The Quest was made in a way to make the users cooperate with each other, and the users had to put their heads together to come up with the answers.

However, Ahn-jaehyun couldn't just release all the information he had right now, and he couldn't ask the Warlord players to finish the Scenario Quest with him.

After thinking it over, Ahn-jaehyun decided to go with the second best plan.

‘In the end, I have to make some deals with the 30 Great Guilds?’

He had to make a deal with the members of the 30 Great Guilds.

In his current situation, if Ahn-jaehyun really wanted to catch the Corrupt Elf by himself, he would have to make a deal with the 30 Great Guilds. Only then would it be possible to attempt this by himself.

“Chet.”

This was disappointing.

However, one thing was for sure, it was a waste to give up right now. Currently, Ahn-jaehyun was rapidly progressing through the Main Scenario Quest. He was well ahead of his competitions.

If he gave up early, he wasn't just giving up on the Main Scenario Quest. Ahn-jaehyun would be giving up on the reason why he had sacrificed everything he had to play this game.

‘I have no choice..’

If he wanted to step on the 30 Great Guilds and rise above them, he would have to make some deals with some of them right now.

Fortunately, he had enough bait to trade with them.

‘Fortunately, I had spread the identity of the Corrupt Count beforehand.’

Amongst the 30 Great Guilds, he had handed over the identity of the Corrupt Count to 29 of the 30 Great Guilds. He had excluded the Hydra guild. He could propose a deal using the the mail address he had used last time. Aside from the transaction, he needed a platform where he would be able to make a deal.

He needed a platform where he could make a deal with any guild. The only thing left to do right now was to choose a partner.

‘In terms of gathering information, the Hydra Guild is the best, but....’

Amongst the 30 great guilds, the Hydra Guild was the furthest along on the Main Scenario Quest. If It wasn't for Ahn-jaehyun, the Hydra guild would have taken care of the Corrupt Count.

This was also the reason why they weren't a suitable transaction partner.

‘If I offer up a proposal, they'll probably try to kill me during the transaction.’

From the Hydra guild's perspective, he had given the identity of the Corrupt Count away. He had suddenly given the information to the 29 guilds without asking for any compensation. They probably wanted to kill Ahn-jaehyun, who had handed this information over. They had suffered an incredible loss, because of him.

‘The next in line is the Storm Hunters and the Red Bulls?’

After the Hydra guild, the only guilds that distinguished themselves by catching the Corrupt Count was the Stormhunters and Red Bulls. When these two guilds killed the Corrupt Count, they pulled ahead of all the other guilds. Moreover, they had closed a significant distance with the Hyrda guild, who was furthest along the Main Scenario Quest. This caused the two guilds to shift their resources from Raiding into progressing the Main Scenario Quest.

‘The Stormhunters overlap with me in terms of the Quests.’

The Main Scenario Quest being carried out by the Stormhunters was the same as Ahn-jaehyun. If he requested a deal for information with them, it was basically grabbing the hands of a competitor, who was hot on his heels. It was basically asking the competitor to run together to the goal line.

‘Yes. I can never give up, because of those bastards. If I give up,

the one that benefits the most is the Stormhunters.'

Even if that wasn't one of his reasons, he would never make deals with the Stormhunters.

So there was only one left.

“Red Bulls.....”

2.

- What do you want to do?

It was Red Bull's guild master Matador Chev.

As one of the most famous users representing Warlord, he was thinking very hard on the problem.

- Should we accept the proposed deal?

“When does he want an answer by?”

- He didn't put a time limit on it, but if we are late in answering, there is a high chance that the dealer might ignore us later.

“How much time do we have to think on this?”

- Faster is better. This kind of information transactions has to be done in a swift manner.

Of course, Chev remembered it. Someone had sent him a mail, and thanks to the information contained within it the Red Bulls guild was able to catch the Corrupt Count.

A mail had once again come from the address that had given him such a valuable information before.

The content was brief.

[I have a customer, who wants to trade information regarding the Main Scenario Quest with the Red Bulls guild. Would you like to make a deal?]

‘Was he a broker?’

He wasn't requesting an info trade for himself. He explicitly said he had a customer wanting to do the info trade.

The information that was vital in the Corrupt Count hunt was provided by this person. However, it was apparent now that he wasn't personally providing the information. He was acting as the go-between in passing along the information. It was proof that this person was a broker.

This wasn't something special or weird. If it was profitable, a perfectly healthy person would even sell their own organs for money. Don't people sell other humans for money even in reality? Warlord was a marketplace where enormous amount of money changed hands. It would be weird if there wasn't any information brokers in Warlord.

‘Yes. It's better that he is a broker. The fact that he is a broker means that we can approach him for trades at any given time.’

Anyways, the proposal that was sent from the other side was decent.

Red Bulls used to be a guild, who only focused on Raids. Now their group, who specialized in Raids, were shifted towards progressing the Main Scenario Quest. They were putting a lot of resources towards this.

The problem was they couldn't recover what they had invested just from doing well. They couldn't be merely good. It was important that they were better than their competitors.

“How would you rate his credibility?”

- At the very least, we don't have to worry about his credibility. Also, didn't we gain a lot last time because of him? I don't think we'll come out at a loss from dealing with him.

This information merchant was the first one to reach out, and give them the identity of the Corrupt Count. The Corrupt Count's identity wasn't known by anyone at the time. As his adviser had said, there was no downside in cooperating with the information merchant.

Chev immediately gave his answer.

“We'll do the trade.”

- Yes! I'll immediately send the mail.

3.

Ahn-jaehyun read the mail sent by the Red Bulls.

[The information we want is regarding the dwarf of the Red mountain. We want to know the location of the Red mountain.]

The moment he saw the content of the mail Ahn-jaehyun rooted through his memories.

‘The Red Bulls are progressing on the rescue the kidnapped dwarf story.’

The Immoral Prince needed to arm the Corrupted Army, so he had kidnapped a dwarf to produce the weapons. The Red Bulls were on the Main Scenario Quest where they had to rescue this dwarf.

‘So they want the secrets of the Salt Mountain.’

The identity of the Red mountain that the Red Bulls wanted to know was the Salt mountain located on the south of the continent.

It looked like a mountain made out of white salt, but the Salt mountain contained a mine that produced red steel. If one followed the quests related to the Salt mountain, one would naturally find out about this fact.

Of course, this truth was spread at a slightly later date. The Salt mountain was a hunting ground where level 120 monsters appeared, so it was a very difficult place to hunt. There weren't a lot of users, who used that stage. Users started operating around that region only recently. This was why this information was known amongst only a select few lucky users.

It wouldn't be too long before the Red Bulls acquired this info on their own. It wasn't a long time for Ahn-jaehyun. However, the Red Bulls was in the dark as to when they'll find the info. This was why the deal would be able to be made.

‘I have enough to make this deal.’

At the very least, he had prepared some cards he could pull out. The only thing left was Ahn-jaehyun's final decision.

‘The only problem is that my identity might become known.’

Ahn-jaehyun had gone through all the bothersome steps to look like a broker for a very simple reason.

It would be a problem if the Hahoe Mask showed up at the designated location given by the Red Bulls. Unless the Red Bulls was stupid, they'll connect the dot between the Hahoe Mask, the information about the Corrupt Count and the mysterious information merchant.

Since he put up a front as a broker, the identity of the information merchant wouldn't be found out to be the Hahoe Mask. For the immediate future, he wouldn't receive any suspicion, but it wasn't a guarantee that it wouldn't happen. Still, the truth wasn't important here. If the Red Bull suspected that the Hahoe Mask and the information merchant ran in the same circle, then they might move against him regardless of not knowing the merchant's identity.

Even if that doesn't happen, Red Bulls would most definitely hold more interest and wariness towards the Hahoe Mask.

If he was to go through with this proposal, he had to be ready for such eventuality.

Of course, Ahn-jaehyun's ultimate goal was to leapfrog the 30 great guilds. He was already receiving a lot of attention, but he'll had to set a goal to receive much more interest in the future.

“Hmmm.”

At that moment, Ahn-jaehyun thought about the Big Smile guild.

They hadn't shown their teeth towards Ahn-jaehyun yet, but the Big Smile guild had attacked him with the Hahoe Mask as their target. This meant they'll probably attack him once again in the future.

Currently, he couldn't go head to head with the Big Smile. In fact, the decision to fight them wasn't in his hands. Big Smile was the one, who had pulled the trigger first. From Ahn-jaehyun's perspective, it was best to make it so that they couldn't pull the trigger again.

“.....should I go meet them once?”

Chapter 86. Deal With The Red Bulls (2)

4.

The large forest was filled with trees, and 3 users had surrounded a small and scrappy goblin. There was traces of a fierce battle, and the users were the victors. However, if one looked at their expressions, one would have a hard time telling if they were really the victors.

One of the group members spat out his words as if he had had just lost.

“Ah. I can't do this any more. Why is this game so hard?”

“From the vids, I saw a person solo several of these monsters. Do we perhaps need to get some Items? This is way too hard. At this rate, when am I going to level up? I want to go through my Advancement soon!”

“Stop spouting nonsense about Items. The price for Items is no joke now. Actually, the low level Items are more expensive. I've always spent a good amount of money during my gaming career, but I've never seen a game that was as expensive as this.”

The complaining 3 users were in a hunting ground that had been provided for users between level 10-20. It was the Tinkle Forest.

It was a place where one could most accurately feel the

popularity of Warlord right now.

“We saw this monster first!”

“Didn't we attack it first?”

“Hey! Let's settle this through PK!”

“Kill that son of a bitch!”

The popularity of Warlord was sky-high, and the number of new users was increasing at an explosive rate. The endless wave of new users meant most of the monsters in the level 30 and below hunting grounds was almost extinct.

This was why the hunting ground that had been provided for the low level users was filled with disorder caused by the users instead of monsters.

In such an atmosphere, two users was using a fallen tree trunk as a bench.

At a glance, it didn't look remarkable. Both users were wearing the supplies given by the Subjugation Association for the level 10 users. In terms of Warlord user's standard, these items weren't even fit to be used as rags. One was basically wasting one's time by wearing such items.

One of the user was wearing a Hahoe Mask, yet it wasn't enough attract the gazes of others. It was easier to find new users wearing the Hahoe Mask than finding a monster.

Of course, no one knew the truth.

“Hahoe Mask..... I really wanted to meet you, but I never expected to meet you here like this..”

The other user wasn't wearing a Hahoe Mask. He was someone who represented Warlord as being one of the most skill users. It was Red Bull's guild master Chev.

“Me too. I had no desire of meeting you, and I never expected to meet you here like this.”

This user wearing the Hahoe Mask was the original one, who had started the fad of wearing it. None of the users, who had laid eyes on him here, was aware of this fact.

No, even if he revealed his identity through his own mouth, no one would take it as the truth.

It was the reason why they had chosen this place for the meeting. It sounded paradoxical, but this was a stage where one didn't need to worry about other's gazes.

So what was the reason behind this meeting?

“You didn't want to meet us? Weren't you the one, who asked for this meeting?”

“I never expected my trade partner to be the Red Bulls.”

“Why did you request this meeting then?”

“The Quest route we are taking doesn't overlap with your Quest route. We are competitors, but we are taking different roads. Therefore, I believe we could help each other out until we reach the goal line. I just never expected such a big fish to show up.”

This was being done, because it would be mutually beneficial.

Red Bulls had been the first one to accept the proposal. The broker had sent a message saying, 'The informant wants to have a direct meeting with you.'

Of course, the Red Bulls was torn about the decision. However, the part that put the exclamation point on the matter was the message saying, 'The Hahoe Mask will come to the meeting as the other side's representative.'

At that moment, Chev decided he would come to the meeting himself.

‘I never expected Chev to come here.’

‘This is a chance to meet with the Hahoe Mask and his benefactor. There's no harm in elevating their status.’

This was how this meeting had come to be.

“Since we have similar motives, the deal should be easy.”

At Chev's reply, Hyrkan took out a note instead of speaking. He handed it to Chev, who was sitting next to him.

“Let's finish the deal before we speak any further.”

Chev also took out a note, and he handed it to Hyrkan. After swapping each other's notes, they immediately read the content of the note. There were two locations listed on Hyrkan's note. Chev's note held three locations.

No other explanation was needed.

They weren't looking for a perfect answer. It was enough to have a direction pointing towards the answer. If one could narrow couple hundred destination to two destinations, it was already a big boon.

Afterwards, the two ripped the notes into pieces.

This was the end to this particular deal.

“Do you perhaps want to join our guild?”

Now another deal could be proposed.

“Our guild sponsors don't have too much power, so it would be hard for us to guarantee that you will receive the front-end treatment. However, we can treat you well enough. You would be able to boast about it others in the gamer profession.”

Chev turned his head to look at Hyrkan. Hyrkan immediately gave an answer to his proposal.

“I'm sorry, but I have a contract.”

“Of course. You have a backer.”

Hyrkan shrugged his shoulders at Chev's words.

“Doesn't everybody know about that?”

“Sometimes it's hard to be sure what is true in this world.”

“If I was unaffiliated, what would have been your proposal? I want to hear about it.”

“We would have give you 3 spots in our broadcast programs, and

you would have received 20% of the ad money. As for your appearance fee, we would have given you something on par with the highest rate in the business.”

When he heard those words, Hyrkan unconsciously gulped.

‘Uh? Is he really prepared to give me all that?’

Chev's proposal was incredible enough to tempt Hyrkan, who had firmed his heart against such offers.

Normally, a Warlord-related broadcast had an average of 10 ads. Of course, one could add more than that. It may be obvious to say this, but the amount of money made by a popular broadcast was enormous.

Chev was willing to part with 20% of the profit gained from the ads. It was most definitely a special treatment. In normal cases, one would get less than 10%, and more often than not the guild wouldn't give any ad money in the first place.

‘The price of my body has most definitely gone up.’

Hyrkan pressed down hard on the slight smile and the interest from forming.

“Too bad. If I knew about your offer first, it would have been better for me.”

As he held himself back, he spoke in a disinterested manner.

When Chev heard those words, he immediately got up from his seat.

‘If he isn't coming over after being given such a significant proposal, it means he can't. Basically, a normal offer from a guild won't be able to pull him away.’

It was true that he coveted the Hahoe Mask. On the other hand, there was a limit to what Chev and the Red Bulls could offer to the Hahoe Mask. Anything more than what he had offered was beyond Chev's authority.

When a task is impossible, one had to learn when to cut bait.

“I guess it'll be too hard to recruit you, but it seems we'll be able to help each other.”

This put an end to his recruitment efforts.

Hyrkan nodded at Chev's words.

Since their Quest routes were different, there was no harm in cooperating with each other until they reach their respective goal line. Moreover, they didn't have to make any additional negotiations.

“So how should I contact you next time?”

They just had to agree on a method of contact.

“Let's do it like how we are doing it right now.”

“Through the broker?”

Hyrkan nodded his head. Chev thought about it for a brief moment. Truthfully, it was better to use a hotline instead of going through a broker. On the other hand, this particular broker had set up this meeting, so he would have to show some respect to the broker.

In the end, Chev didn't have a good enough relationship with the Hahoe Mask to set up a hotline. Moreover, from the Red Bull's perspective, they didn't have any evidence that backed up the Hahoe Mask's credibility.

“All right.”

Chev, who was already standing up, started to turn away from Hyrkan.

“I'll see you next.....”

At that moment...

‘This is it.’

Hyrkan spoke as if he had waited for this moment.

“Be careful of the Big Smile.”

Chev whipped his head around when he heard those words, but Hyrkan was already on the move. Chev caught sight of Hyrkan's back.

5.

‘Whew. That scared me stiff..’

Hyrkan was running at full speed, and he used his hand to rub at a location below his chest.

‘Did I succeed?’

Hyrkan had prepared a lot for today. He yelled out his line, 'Be careful of the Big Smile!', about a hundred times in front of a mirror as he practiced his expression.

‘At the very least, this will prevent the Red Bulls from cooperating with the Big Smile.’

He was satisfied with result.

Hyrkan had insisted on meeting face to face with the Red Bulls, because he wanted to give a warning about the Big Smile. On top of that, he hadn't given any reasons to his warning.

He couldn't, since it was baseless.

Truthfully, there wasn't any clear reason why the Red Bulls should be careful of the Big Smile.

Since the words he had thrown out didn't have any rhyme or reason, he had to exhibit an atmosphere where his words would have to be believed.

‘I've been thinking about this situation in too simple terms.’

He once again ruminated on the result he had created with his action, and Hyrkan nodded his head.

‘Like this, I have to form walls between the 30 Great Guilds.’

While he was planning out this meeting, Hyrkan formed a new goal.

The 30 Great Guilds were an opponent Hyrkan had to step on. Hyrkan didn't have to worry about being targeted by a single guild. He could handle that much.

The problem would be if the 30 Great Guilds cooperated with each other to eradicate Hyrkan.

If he truly wanted to step on and leapfrog the 30 Great Guilds, he had to ruin the relationships between the guilds.

He had to play each sides against each other.

This was what Hyrkan needed to do.

‘Yes. I can't repeat the same mistake again. I have to stop those bastards from getting friendly with each other.’

Hyrkan's thoughts ended there.

‘Also.....’

It was time to change the picture inside his head.

There were two locations written on the note handed over to him by Chev. Moreover, the note also contained information on which location was more likely to be the place he was searching for.

‘It says there is a higher chance of the Corrupted Elf being at the Red Lake.’

The stage was called the Red Lake.

It was a hunting ground where level 120 and up monsters showed up. In the middle of a large forest, a small red lake was located there.

Unlike the normal hunting grounds, where the normal sized monsters appeared, this place was unique. The mid to large sized monsters appeared here. If a large monster appeared, numerous users would have to attack to take it down. It was a Raid type hunting ground.

This was why it was nicknamed the Raid Training Ground!

“Ha ha.”

‘I really like this.’

Before Hyrkan had returned to the past, this was the training ground he had used to develop his method of dealing with large monsters.

Hyrkan's expression brightened as he ran.

‘It feels like I'm going back home.’

- It is only a hunch, but I think it's the Salt Mountain. The other two places doesn't really fit the description. It is as if it was added after the fact to make it fit with the other location. It is highly likely that the place we are looking for is the Salt Mountain.

“If it is the Salt Mountain, we'll focus all our attention there.”

- Of course.

After concluding the deal with the Hahoe Mask, Chev immediately contacted his most trusted subordinate to send him the information. Chev told the subordinate the 3 locations given to him by the Hahoe Mask. His subordinate immediately searched for data regarding those locations, and he gave his opinion.

Normally, the call would have ended there.

However, after a brief indecision, Chev asked a new question.

“Are the Big Smile guild dangerous?”

His underling gave an immediate answer to the question.

- The Big Smile? They are dangerous.

“Your reasons?”

- Master might already know this, but the Big Smile fighting against the Triple Wing. They are on the losing side right now, and they aren't showing any signs of rallying. Since the Big Smile is on shaky footing, the Underfoot guilds are riled up right now.

“The Underfoots?”

Underfoot.

It was a term coined for the guilds with enough force and influence to be able to contend for the spot on the 30 Great Guild. However, they weren't included in the 30 Great Guilds yet.

They were basically under the feet of the 30 Great Guilds, so the term stuck.

The Underfoot Guilds were gunning for the live channels. If they could acquire a live channel, they'll basically be considered a part of the 30 Great Guilds.

From the perspective of the guild masters of the 30 Great Guilds, they were an opponent they had to be very vigilant against.

Chev's eyes turned sharp.

“Give me a more thorough explanation..”

- Several Underfoot guilds are talking about merging to form a new Guild. They plan on usurping Big Smile guild's live channel. That's the rumor right now.

“So it's only a rumor?”

- It isn't just a rumor. Several Underfoot guilds are lobbying the Triple Wing for help.

Chev, who was listening to the story, let out a long sigh.

“It's really complicated.”

His subordinate answered with laughter in his voice.

- The money being exchanged isn't small. This is a game, yet it isn't a game. This fight is only child's play right now. At the very least, nothing big has happened in reality.

Chev let out a bitter laugh at his subordinate's words.

“So why do you think the Big Smile is dangerous?”

- Once the live channel is stolen, Big Smile will be smashed. In reality, it isn't just about the profit made from the broadcasts. They have a lot of investors, and they had spent their money without a care. If the live channel was taken from them... It is so horrible that I don't want to imagine it.

“It really is too terrible to imagine.”

- If such a situation occurs, Big Smile will use any method possible to piss up a storm. You have to look at them as a ticking time bomb that's about blow up. So why did you bring up the Big Smile?

His subordinate finally asked the question, and Chev gave a short answer.

“Someone told me to be careful of the Big Smile.”

His subordinate didn't even need to ask who this person was.

The fact that Chev had asked this question in such a guarded manner meant the person, who gave this info was a noteworthy figure.

-I'll tell them to be on guard. There is no downside to being careful.

Chev took his subordinate's advice into consideration.

- It'll be good to put a good amount of distance between the Big Smile and us.

“That might be for the best.”

The talk about Big Smile ended there. His subordinate switched the topic.

- So when are you going to come over here? We are finished preparing for the Raid. Guild master just has to show up.

Raid!

That word had the effect of organizing the complicated thoughts inside Chev's head. He was like the Pavlov's Dog. Everything about Chev changed.

“After 6 hours, we'll immediately charge into the Raid.”

He had to once again do remarkable feats as the hero of the battlefield.

Chapter 87. Corrupted Elf (1)

1.

It was 10 meters long. It was a beast with two feet and two wings. It looked similar to a chicken. However, it had gray lizard-like scales instead of feathers. Its tail was long, and it reminded one of a dinosaur's tail.

Moreover, its comb was quite memorable. The red comb on top of its head was sharp like a blade, and the wattle under its beak was letting out a soft light. It was letting out a strange foreboding feeling. The beak between the comb reminded one of a large spear.

However, the most striking part of its appearance was its armor. It wore a red armor that was akin to a horse saddle.

Its name was the Gray Cockatrice.

It was a level 120 mid-sized monster. It was one of the many monsters that drank out of the Red Lake.

One couldn't look down on it, but it was a monster one could take down if given the opportunity.

The Garten Party had been hunting at the Red Lake for 4 weeks, and they had already caught 5 of these monsters.

“Shit!”

However, their reaction was different from the last time they had met this particular monster.

“We caught a Corrupted monster last week, yet it appeared once again? How is this possible?”

The loud complaint was heard by the Gray Cockatrice, and it quickly turned its head. When it turned its head, one could see it in its eyes. It was as if a vast quantity of black ink had been dripped into a gray lake. The black energy was swirling inside the eyes.

The ten users, who were part of the Garten Party, frowned as they saw the light in its eyes.

“What should we do?”

“We have to fight it.”

“I don't think it'll be easy.”

“Isn't that bastard fast at moving? If we run, three to four of our party members will be killed. It's better to fight it right now, then ask for help.”

At that moment...

“It's about to bite!”

One user, who had been keeping an eye on the Gray Cockatrice, let out a yell. Everyone's gaze focused on the Gray Cockatrice. They caught sight of its beak opening wide. Its open beak was wide enough to put a human head through.

From the wide open beak...

Ggi-roo-roo-roo!

An ear-piercing cry was let out. Instead of a sound, the bizarre cry transformed into wind, and it started to gust into the surrounding. The power of the wind was considerable as the plants filling the Red Lake started to tremble.

In between the horrible shriek...

[Corrupted Gray Cockatrice let out a sudden roar.]

[Every Stat will be reduced by 20%.]

[You are feeling Fear. Your movement speed will be decreased by 15%.]

They heard the announcement.

[The Mysterious Soft Candy nullified the Fear and the Curse.]

After hearing the announcement, the ten users heard a new announcement. They had already taken a consumable item. It was the effect of the Mysterious Soft Candy.

Small fireworks were going off inside the mouth of the Ten Users.

The very first ones to move was two users equipped with heavy armors, large shields, and powerful hammers. The two users boasted similar body size, and they ran towards the Gray Cockatrice, who was still letting out its bizarre cry.

One of the user raised his hammer high, then he yelled out.

“Lightning Stun!”

Accompanying his shout, the thrown hammer spun like a wheel as it flew towards the monster.

Pahjeek, pah-ji-jeek!

As the hammer spun, it started creating lighting. The flying hammer changed its trajectory like a curveball, and it accurately

struck the Gray Cockatrice on its head.

Kwahng!

The explosive sound reverberated, and the Gray Cockatrice stopped letting out its cry.

When the horrendous shriek stopped, the Gray Cockatrice focused its gaze on the user, who had thrown the hammer.

The user, who had thrown the monster, readied himself for the imminent attack as he put the large shield in front of him.

During all of this, the other 8 users were moving busily.

The 3 Magicians readied their magic, and two Strikers quickly positioned themselves behind the Gray Cockatrice. Two Priests readied themselves behind the Magicians, and a single priest shadowed a single Striker.

There was a flurry of movements.

At the height of the movement, a sound that notified the start of the battle was heard.

Gga-gahng!

It was the sound of the Gray Cockatrice's beak ramming hard into the tanker's shield.

2.

“Breaking news! Breaking news!”

Smarwolf Village.

The Smarwolf Village was the closest settlement near the Red Lake region, but it wasn't a large town. There were exactly 12 buildings in the entire village. The largest building was a 3 story building, which was occupied by the Subjugation Association. Of course, the users, who had come to this place, all gathered at the Subjugation Association's branch office.

“Garten Party was wiped out!”

When the several dozen users gathered on the 1st floor heard the breaking news, it was as if hail was dropping on the surface of a lake. It created multiple ripples.

“The Garten Party?”

“I thought their average level was 127? They were wiped out, but how could they be wiped out at the Red Lake considering their level of skill?”

“In truth, they just graduated to those levels. They were hunting here to train.”

People started developing doubts as to the validity of the news.

However, their misgiving was cut off immediately when they heard this.

“They were killed by a Corrupted Gray Cockatrice!”

It wasn't said by the user, who had yelled out the breaking news. Someone else had given the explanation.

When the users heard the explanation, several of them let out a sigh of complaint.

Poo-hoo!

“It's a Corrupted Monster again?”

“Recently, the Red Lake has been acting strange. It hasn't been like this before. Now the Corrupted Monsters regen almost regularly now.”

“We already caught one last week. It hasn't even been a whole week.... I don't think its a bug.”

“The Regen Time was probably changed.”

It seemed this wasn't the first time such an occurrence had happened. No one moved around restlessly from confusion. Instead, several of them started giving their opinions.

“We can't just let it be. We have to catch it. Do we have to for a party like last time?”

“We could form a party, but would anyone join it? I calculated the profit and loss last time. I estimate each user, who had joined the party, had a loss of around 3-4 hundred gold.”

“They took a loss? I thought a lot of Ingredient Gems had dropped?”

“A lot of them died. They had to give compensation for those users, who died, so there weren't any profit left.”

“It's too strong. The ones that are appearing recently are somehow worse. Aren't they showing up wearing armor? The 1st rate Raid teams of the 30 Great Guilds would probably have to do this. A party hastily constructed from the parties here won't get the job done.”

The serious conversations continued.

It happened once again in front of them.

“Breaking news!”

A new breaking news had arrived.

Everyone turned to look at the user, who had yelled out. The user spoke when everyone's gaze was on him.

“The Hahoe.....”

Before the user could end his sentence, the door to the Subjugation Association opened, and a single user appeared.

He had a light cloth armor that made one doubt if it gave any defense. The user looked to be wearing a taekwondo uniform, and his face was covered by a Korean traditional mask. It was a unique mask called the Hahoe Mask.

“.....Mask is coming this way.”

“We know. He's over there.”

After hearing the reply, the user, who had shouted out the breaking news, turned his head.

Everyone's gaze was on the new user, who had appeared. Their gazes headed towards Hyrkan. Instead of being confused by the gaze on him, Hyrkan pulled back his shoulders and he proudly

stood with a straight back.

‘Finally, my fame has reached this point. Kyahh. It really makes me want to play this game more.’

3.

The Red Lake was a hunting ground for users over level 120. It was quite popular amongst the many hunting grounds.

There were 3 reasons why this place was popular.

First, level 120 medium to large monsters appeared here. The important point was that the Boss Monsters didn't show up here. Instead, the normal mid to large sized monsters appeared here. Most of the mid to large sized monsters one meets in Warlord was Boss Monsters. The 30 Great Guilds and even the Underfoot Guilds was able to use Boss Monsters as practice partners. This wasn't true for normal parties or the small guilds. So this stage was a great place to practice for a Boss Monster Raid.

Secondly, the EXP given here was worth its time. Even a single mid to large sized monsters gave a great amount of EXP, so one didn't have to try so hard to catch a lot of them. The amount of ingredient coins one could acquire was significant, and the probability of a Gem Ingredient showing up was high.

The third reason was the rule. Since only the high level users gathered here, it was hard to act with bad manners. This stage had

the strongest unwritten rule amongst the hunting grounds, so it was possible to focus solely on hunting.

The most important reason amongst the three was the first one. Users had to know how to hunt mid to large sized monsters. It was only then would one be able to enjoy Raids. Raids were the flower of Warlord. If one didn't know how to raid, one would have to level up only by catching regular mid to large sized monsters. It would be very boring.

This was why this hunting ground was packed. If there wasn't an open spot in a party, one had to take a ticket. One would have to wait one's turn.

“Spot? There are a lot of spots open right now.”

Luckily, a spot opened up when Hyrkan arrived. It wasn't just one. Multiple spots opened up.

Hyrkan titled his head in confusion.

“From what I heard, there weren't any spots left, and there was a 2 day waiting period.”

“A party was just wiped out right now. This caused several parties to give up and leave towards a different location”

Hyrkan once again tilted his head in puzzlement. At that moment, someone had approached Hyrkan from his back. Hyrkan

slowly turned his head to look behind him. He saw a man. He was a user wearing decent armor. He had blonde hair and blue eyes. His appearance was striking. The man asked a question as he looked at Hyrkan.

“You are the Hahoe Mask?”

Hyrkan's eyes narrowed.

He had too many enemies, so his heart was filled with suspicion instead of being filled with welcoming feelings.

“Since I can't show you my face, I can't prove my identity. However, I am operating under the name of the Hahoe Mask.”

With those words, Hyrkan looked at the other man's item setting.

‘His level..... Well, he seems to be around level 120.’

Truthfully, he had no idea what items this user was wearing. It wasn't as if Hyrkan had memorized every item. Moreover, the item's design could be changed solely at the user's discretion. Unless there was a special ingredient that was being displayed, it was hard to discern the identity of an item just by looking at its design.

“Who are you?”

“I'm Pelato. I'm affiliated with the Golden Brothers guild.”

Golden Brothers.

At that point, Hyrkan let out a sigh of relief.

‘He isn't an enemy..’

He was well acquainted with this guild. They were the guild, who had increased in strength, alongside the Hahoe Mask Guild. The Hahoe Mask Guild and the Golden Brother Guild attempted to seize the stranglehold held by the 30 Great Guilds. They were a famous guild that represented the Underfoot guilds. Currently, they boasted a force that was comparable to a 30 Great Guild.

However, he had never heard of the name Pelato.

‘It basically means he is a smallfry.’

It was either one of two things. He had a reason for stop playing this game or as Hyrkan suspected, this guy wasn't that big of a deal.

“Golden Brothers. I've never fostered a bad relationship with such an amazing guild. What do you want with me?”

“I'm not here to cause a fight. I'm just here to give you a

proposal.”

“If it's about entering your guild, I'll decline.”

Hyrkan had a slight pain in his stomach as he gave his answer.

‘Ah, the recruitment proposal by the Red Bulls was fantastic.’

He thought about the recent conversation he had with Chev. After that conversation, he researched the recent profit the Red Bulls had pulled from showing ads on their live channel programs. As he started calculating the figure, an amount that made his insides hurt appeared.

Hyrkan had refused such a massive offer, so he had no reasons to accept the recruitment proposal of the Golden Brothers.

The Golden Brothers didn't try to recruit him.

“Would you like to catch the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice with us?”

Hyrkan tilted his head in confusion at the proposal. This was the third time someone ask him to join their party.

‘Corrupted?’

When he understood the situation, the light in Hyrkan's eyes changed.

Corrupted Gray Cockatrice.

‘Isn't this killing two birds with one stone?’

I'm sure now. This is evidence that the Corrupted Elf is here. Hyrkan corrected his posture.

“I'm sorry. I don't have the spare time to do that. I've already made plans. I don't want to deviate from what I have to do.”

It would be the worst plan for him to accept their proposal. Hyrkan's true target wasn't the Corrupted Monster. His target was the Corrupted Elf, who was making these Corrupted monsters.

Of course, he would have immediately turned down the proposal even if he didn't have something else to do.

‘The fact that he is giving me this proposal means his party is an improvised party. There's a limit to what an improvised party could do at this stage.’

Chemistry was important. Even if everyone was skilled users, it was hard to develop chemistry on the spot.

Moreover, even if he was famous, this was the first time Hyrkan

had stepped on this stage from Pelato's perspective. It meant he needed a sacrificial lamb. Pelato needed the weight behind Hyrkan's name.

Hyrkan wasn't a pushover, who would immediately accept this proposal. He only looked like a pushover.

Pelato also stared at Hyrkan.

“Too bad. I wanted to fight in sync with the famous Hahoe Mask.”

Pelato turned his back towards Hyrkan.

Hyrkan's eyes narrowed as he looked at the user's back.

‘It seems they are trying to catch it through any means possible... Is there any way I'll be able to use the Golden Brothers?’

Hyrkan started to form a plot.

Chapter 88. Corrupted Elf (2)

4.

Hyrkan looked at the Red Lake in front of his eyes.

If he calculated the size of the lake, it would be around 30 pyeong.

It wasn't small, but one couldn't call it large either. Instead of a lake, it was closer to a collection of ponds.

The water that filled the lake to the brim was red like its name indicated. However, this red color didn't give off an ominous feeling. The water gave off a feeling as if it would taste like a sour fruit if one drank it.

Hyrkan squatted in front of the lake. He cupped his hands, and he gathered the water into his mouth. It tasted like an unripe fruit. A slight tanginess and a fresh bitterness swirled around inside his mouth.

‘It's been awhile since I've tasted this.’

Of course, it wasn't tasty.

No one would search this place out to come taste this water.

It tasted like soju to Hyrkan. It wasn't tasty. However, when he

drank it, the taste reminded him of something.

For a brief moment, Hyrkan soaked in his memories.

‘This is the place where I refined my basic skills. I was able to confirm my potential here and it allowed me to have a dream.’

In the initial phase of forming the Hahoe Mask guild, they were extremely poor. Everyone didn't have money, so they equipped lower level items or even the normal Rank items. Since their item specs were lacking, it had been really hard to hunt.

There were times when they located monster corpses that were thrown away because users were lazy to butcher the corpses or they were left behind for some other reason. Sometimes, that would be the only time they felt pleasure.

They ignored the Quests; they didn't even dream about getting titles. They focused on hunting to level up as fast as they could.

The Hahoe Mask Guild had gone through considerable amount of difficulties, but they were able to reach level 100. After going through their Advancement, they were ready to begin Raiding in earnest. With that in mind, they had come to the Red Lake to train.

This was where he had seen the possibilities.

Hyrkan had shown his potential and the confidence that he could do this was gained here! He wouldn't be the best, but he was

confident he could get the job done. Hyrkan's presence gave confidence to the Hahoe Mask guild. It also bolstered his own confidence. He was able to see his own potential.

‘Hmmm.’

Now it was all just bitter memories.

Hyrkan shook the remaining lake water off his hands. Hyrkan stood up and raised his gaze.

Hyrkan's eyes already picked up something moving underwater towards him from the distance.

‘It's already here.’

Hyrkan was standing next to the lake. This was where monsters came to sate their thirst.

All the monsters living at the Red Lake had the habit of drinking from this lake.

This was why they made the lake their territory. The Red Lake had several dozen pond sized lakes like the one in front of him. If a user wanted to hunt here, each of these lakes were a stage set up for the users.

Currently, the one coming towards him were Hyrkan's monster.

Of course, Hyrkan got ready to greet to it. Hyrkan picked an underling that will greet it.

‘Of course, it has to be this one.’

He had already picked out an underling that will greet this monster.

Ssoohk!

Hyrkan took out a Skeleton Fragment. This wasn't the regular Bone Fragment he carried around.

Gem.

The Skeleton Fragment was made by carving a Gem ingredient. The appearance of the Skeleton Fragment looked similar to a Skeleton Warrior with its Bone Armor on.

However, there were differences. The design of the Bone Armor was slightly different compared to the one Hyrkan summoned. Moreover, the Skeleton Warriors only wore pieces of an armor. This one was completely encased in armor, and the biggest difference was that this Skeleton Warrior held a shield.

This was a Skeleton Fragment of a Skeleton Knight.

Hyrkan threw the Skeleton Knight Fragment on the floor. The thrown gem quickly morphed into the Skeleton Knight.

The corner of his mouth lifted as he looked at the Skeleton Knight.

‘It is cool no matter when I see it.’

It was well over 2 meters tall and it had a heavy build. The Skeleton Knight's aura and strength couldn't be compared to the Skeleton Warriors. However, the difference wasn't only in its size. It didn't have the aura of fragility that a normal Skeleton Warrior possessed. There was a pure and elegant light twinkling between its skull. As it let out its breathe, a dark smoke came out from between its mouth and it subsided. This process repeated itself.

[Special ability 'Chivalry' was activated.]

[Special ability 'Leader' was activated.]

On top of all that, the Skeleton Knight made its presence known as the System Announcement range out.

These were the Skeleton Knight's special abilities. Chivalry and Leader was active.

Chivalry was an option that proportionally increased the Stat of a

Skeleton Knight as the number of Skeleton Warriors increased. Every time a single Skeleton Warrior was added, the Skeleton Knight's Stats was increased by 5 percent. Currently, the Stat could be increased up to 25%.

The Leader was a special ability that increased the Stat of the Skeleton Warriors, who fought close to the Skeleton Knight. Currently, it increased their Stat by 10%. Moreover, the Leader skill stack with the Skeleton Science and Madness Helm. When a Skeleton Knight was nearby, the Skeleton Warrior and Magician's attack capability became quite scary.

Moreover, the Skeleton Knight had a passive option. Even at Rank F, it allowed him to summon 3 additional Skeletons.

Hyrkan didn't stop there.

Hyrkan spread his Skeleton Fragments. Eight Skeleton Warriors and two Skeleton Magicians appeared. Hyrkan once again spread another batch of Skeleton Fragments. Nine Fragments were thrown.

Seven Skeleton Warriors and two Skeleton Magicians appeared.

He had a total of nineteen!

If he included the Skeleton Knight, he had twenty!

This was the maximum amount of force Hyrkan could currently

summon. Hyrkan smiled as he saw the group of Skeletons.

‘It isn't on Rich Lich's level, but I feel a bit more like a Necromancer now.’

In front of Hyrkan....

Koo-roo-roo!

The group of Skeletons looked towards the Red Lake. An enormous 20 meter long lizard appeared with its guards up. There were 5 spear-like thorns growing out of its back. The striking Thorn Lizard flicked its tongue.

This was for his video's view count. His supporting actor had appeared.

5.

Ko-oohng!

The large Thorn Lizard charged directly into the Skeleton Knight's shield.

Choo-choo-choo!

The Skeleton Knight was being pushed back but it wasn't bowled

over. It stayed upright as it resisted.

Koohng, koohng!

The Thorn Lizard kept ramming the shield as it tried to topple the Skeleton Knight.

Ddul-gooluk, ddul-gooluk!

The Skeleton Warriors flew at the Thorn Lizard like arrows. A couple climbed atop the Thorn Lizard's body and several moved around its body, swinging their swords.

Shweek, shweek!

The tough leather of the Thorn Lizard didn't allow the Skeleton Warriors to make deep wounds. However, the Skeleton Warriors were equipped with expensive weapons so they were most definitely hurting the monster.

Keeeee, keeeee!

The Thorn Lizard let out a cry when it was wounded. It started to turn away from the Skeleton Knight as it let out a cry. It planned on sweeping all of its enemy with its large body, turning like the hand of a clock.

The large monster was 20 meters long and it was spinning with

all its might. Several Skeleton Warriors were sent flying by its movement.

However, the Skeleton Knight wasn't sent flying. It jumped over the flying tail to avoid it and brought its sword down as it landed.

Poo-haht!

The Skeleton Knight's sword made a long and deep wound on the body of the Thorn Lizard.

Keeeeeee!

The Thorn Lizard stopped its movement, glaring at the Skeleton Knight.

Hwa-roo-roo!

During all of this, 4 large fireballs headed towards the body of the Thorn Lizard in an arc. On the other side of the Skeleton Knight, the Skeleton Magicians were using the Golem as a castle wall. They had thrown their magic spells.

The fireballs fell on the spine of the Thorn Lizard, after which the flames began to spread instantly.

Hwa-roo-roo!

The flames looked like a mane.

After the Skeleton Magician threw their magic, they started to cast their second magic spell. Their two bony hands were raised in front of each other, and a small fireball started to form in between their palms. The Skeleton Magicians started moving their hands around as if they were playing with it, and the fireballs started to increase in size.

The Thorn Lizard immediately threw its body towards the Skeleton Magicians.

Koo-oohng!

However, the Golem wouldn't allow it to harm the Skeleton Magicians. The Golem used its body to block the Thorn Lizard's charge. As expected, the Golem was pushed back, but it didn't fall down.

Keeeeeee!

The Thorn Lizard couldn't hold back its anger, so it let out a roar.

At that moment, 4 Skeleton Warriors on its horn started to move. The Skeleton Warriors didn't show any signs of fear as they threw their body towards the incomparably large Lizard.

The only spectator of this sight was Hyrkan. He took out a candy from his pocket and put it in his mouth.

Bbah-doo-dook!

He immediately chewed on the candy.

Gulp gulp!

Then he immediately took out a small bottle, downing the content in a single gulp.

Gulp gulp!

He finished it off with a gum. Hyrkan chewed furiously, trying to extract the sweetness from the gum as soon as possible.

Hyrkan continuously eating all of these items, and his expression didn't look too great.

‘I don't have any magical energy left.’

Twenty Skeletons and a Golem was battling the Lizard. It was the best stage for a Necromancer to showcase his abilities. However, the magic power he needed for this stage was beyond Hyrkan's capabilities.

The result was predictable. Hyrkan hadn't focused his entire Stat on Magic Powers, so it strained his resources to control this many troops at once. Beside the fact that he was overextending himself,

it was also a waste of resources.

Of course, Hyrkan knew this truth.

Still, there was a reason why he chose to do it this way.

‘Yes. The footage will come out great.’

He had to catch two rabbits here.

First, he had turned level 100 and needed a full-scale footage of how a Necromancer fights. It was the same for all the Classes, but the Classes became much different once one goes through the Advancement.

Moreover, the footage of a Necromancer over level 100 was rare. The footage he would produce this time was basically a lottery ticket that was guaranteed to win.

Moreover, he had to let his presence be known. He had to make them realize the Hahoe Mask wasn't some unique Necromancer. He had to make people realize that Necromancer Class was strong in itself.

This would deter scrubs from picking a fight with Hyrkan.

‘My proficiency is rising too.’

The second reason was the Proficiency of his Skills. If he wanted to raise his Skill Rank, he had to use it a lot in battle. It would be in his interest to use his skills in various types of battle. It was especially helpful in increasing in rank when one fought against medium to large monsters.

The problem was it was very hard to hunt a mid-sized monster on the normal fields. Most of the mid-sized monsters were Boss monsters. If one wanted to Rank up the lacking Skills, it was best to overuse it at the most suitable stage. If one had the funds, this was the most wise course of action.

This was why Hyrkan had bound his hands behind his back, and he started eating numerous recovery items.

‘Still, I’ll be broke when the hunting ends here... For a while, I’ll have to eat the cheap ramen.’

Of course, his inside hurt.

His one week worth of grocery fee was being drained away as if he was drinking water. There was no way he would feel comfortable inside.

Except...

‘Still, they fought very well.’

His hurting insides were soothed by the fact that his Skeleton

Warriors were fighting well even without his instructions.

A message suddenly arrived during all of this.

Every user at the Red Lake joined a community when they came here, and someone had sent a note to the entire community.

Hyrkan opened the note and took a glance at it.

[The Corrupted Gray Cockatrice is moving north.]

Hyrkan frowned when he saw the warning message.

‘They still haven't caught it.’

Corrupted Gray Cockatrice.

The estimated level of the monster was between 130 and 140. The level wasn't low not by a long shot. Moreover, this one had the title of Corrupted. This wasn't a regular monster. One would have to consider it a Boss monster.

‘Of course, they can't catch it.’

Currently, if one wanted to take down a level 140 Boss monster,

the 30 Great Guild's 1st string Raid teams would have to take care of this.

However, the Raid team's schedule was tight. The schedule was planned out a week in advance. They couldn't suddenly change their schedule because a monster had suddenly appeared at the Red Lake. It wasn't an easy task to make such a change.

‘Moreover, it's probably burdensome to come here.’

At the same time, the Red Lake was a stage where someone couldn't claim it. It was a precious location. It had the nickname of being the Raid Training Facility. Various guilds and unaffiliated users treasured this place. If someone claimed this location for themselves, there would be a quick revolt.

A problem appeared at an ownerless house. Who would want to solve such a problem in earnest?

‘Nobody would volunteer themselves to catch this monster.’

The most crucial problem was the fact that the users here were worth a lot.

Hyrkan was the only level 100 user here. Most of the users here were over level 120, and there were a good number of level 130 users here.

Their levels would put them in the top 1% of Warlord. It was hard

to reach this point just through pure skills. These users started playing Warlord from the beginning, and they had spent an incredible amount of money in this game. These users didn't think of Warlord as a game. They thought of it as a way of life.

These users were quick at calculating and forming judgements. Of course, they would be able to calculate the risks.

‘Did he say his name was Pelato?’

He spoke opposite of what everyone wanted to do.

He had stepped forward saying he wanted to catch the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice. This basically meant Pelato probably had an ulterior motive.

There was only one announcement posted up in the community board. It was an announcement trying to gather members for an attack force for the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice.

Pelato was affiliated with the Golden Brothers. However, he was publicly gathering volunteers to hunt down the Corrupted monster.

‘There must be some merit to doing this if he willing to take this risk.’

He couldn't pinpoint what Pelato was aiming for. However, Hyrkan knew Pelato wasn't doing this, because he loved the Red

Lake.

Hyrkan put on a bloody smile when he thought about Pelato's appearance.

‘I'll wait and bide my time.’

Truthfully, Hyrkan was in a hurry. He had to kill the monster to gain a hint regarding the Corrupted Elf. If the 30 Great guilds got involved, Hyrkan's option of intervening would disappear.

Still, it was also true that Hyrkan won't be able to catch this monster by himself. It would be wise to cooperate with Pelato.

However, he didn't feel the need to extend his hand out first.

He'll wait. Pelato will come to him with an attractive offer at a later time.

That will especially be true if he sees the footage Hyrkan would be uploading soon. Pelato would have to bet large to win over Hyrkan.

Hyrkan let out a smile.

‘Luck is running my way.’

6.

Pelato.

He was affiliated with the Underfoot guild named Golden Brothers. He had a background where most Warlord users would be envious of him.

He was level 134. He was comfortably in the top level range, and his item setting wasn't inferior to anyone.

However, there was a reason why he was at the Red Lake. His standing within the Golden Brothers wasn't that great, and the fact that he was here was the greatest proof.

‘I'll catch this monster. I'll prove my ability and I'll enter the first string team.’

If he was really skilled, he wouldn't be here. He would be one of the members carrying out the Raids for the Golden Brothers.

His skill was lacking. He was sent to the Red Lake so he could become more skilled.

Basically, he was a 2nd string member.

This was Pelato's current circumstances.

Of course, Pelato didn't like his current situation. Moreover, he didn't think his skills were lacking compared to the 1st string members. He speculated the reason why he couldn't become 1st string member was because there weren't any spots open on the 1st team.

‘I have to.....’

He had waited patiently until now.

However, the recent round of rumors was making him desperate.

‘I have to become a 1st string member before there is a guild merge.’

The Big Smile Guild was on shaky grounds, so several Underfoot guilds including Golden Brothers were thinking about merging. There was a well-known rumor that the merged Underfoot Guilds were going to gun for Big Smile guild's position.

It was only a rumor, but there was a good chance that it might happen. If the rumor turned out to be true, Pelato would gain a lot more competition. This was why he had to solidify himself as a 1st string member before such events came to pass.

This was the reason why he was aiming for the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice.

This monster was basically a Boss monster. If he had a crucial role in taking it down, he would be re-evaluated by his guild. He won't be immediately put into the 1 string team, but it would put his career back on track in becoming a member of the Raid team.

The problem right now was that there weren't enough volunteers.

‘I have to catch the monster at all cost. I've formed three parties by gathering the volunteers, but there are only 16 of us.... At the very least, I need to gather 30 members.’

Most of the users that came to Red Lake had left after determining they had to spare their own lives. Many users determined it would be better to hunt at a different hunting ground.

In this kind of situation, there was one way to increase the volunteers.

One had to provide a merit that'll allow them to overcome the risks.

However, Pelato didn't have enough power to provide such merits. There was no way his guild would help him.

‘What should I do?’

His worries were soon solved.

- Pelato.

“Huh? It's been awhile.”

- Yes. How have you been?

“Same as always.”

- Anyways, I heard you are publicly gathering members for Raiding the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice?

“The rumor has spread that far?”

- I don't need rumors to know about such things. I just need a single search to know about it. Anyways, there is someone who wants to speak with you. What do you want to do? Do you want to speak to this person?

“Who is it?”

- It's a person from the Apollo Guild. They are a guild with a significant amount of capital behind them. They want to speak with you.

It was the Apollo Guild.

Chapter 89. Corrupted Elf (3)

7.

“The consumable items needed in the Raid will be provided. Level 120 Unique items will be loaned out to you.”

The offer was sweet.

“This is my condition. During the Raid, you have to lure the Hahoe Mask into a Game over.”

The price he had to pay was also terrifying.

For a moment, this was why Pelato worried over the decision after hearing the full story. The proposal was too sweet to dismiss it immediately, yet it was too burdensome to accept it.

The man from the Apollo guild had to reformulate the proposal.

“I am loaning out the Unique items as compensation. If you succeed in this, I'll just give you the ones you used.”

He had put another weight on the scale, and the scale was tipping to one side.

“All right.”

Pelato accepted the offer.

8.

[Your level has increased.]

[Skeleton Science Skill Rank has risen to Rank B.]

It had been 3 days since he started hunting at the Red Lake. Hyrkan finally experienced his first Level Up at the Red Lake.

After finishing his Level Up, he immediately opened the Red Lake Community Board on the hologram window. Hyrkan didn't show any interest in the large monster he had just caught.

It was because there was a post about the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice.

‘There is a fair number of people gathered now.’

The content of the recruitment notice was significantly different from the one he saw from 3 days ago.

There were two big changes.

The consumable items needed for the Monster Raid will be provided by Pelato, and if needed, he will loan out Unique items.

If one had money, it wasn't a difficult thing to do.

‘So where did he get all that money from?’

The consumable items and the loaned items would cost a pretty penny.

Of course, since Pealto was making such a big investment, the footage rights was given to him. Moreover, he would get 30% of all the ingredient coins and gems earned from this Raid.

On the other hand, if they failed on the first try, he would lose a lot of personal capital in this venture.

Anyways, Pelato's attempt worked.

The previously slow to fill Raid attack force was quickly filled with participants. Currently, 25 users had joined the group.

This was within the range of possibility. However, there was a reason why Hyrkan was more sensitive to this job. Hyrkan checked the content of the message he received during his previous battle.

[Participation Bonus 5 thousand gold. Success Bonus 20 thousand gold.]

‘A total of 25,000 gold.’

If he participated in this Raid, he would be given 5 thousand gold. Moreover, twenty thousand gold would be given if the hunt was successful!

Pelato was betting an enormous amount of gold on him.

‘He is laying it on strong.’

In the beginning, the Participation Bonus was 2 thousand gold, and the Success Bonus was 10 thousand gold.

The amount had doubled. However, it wasn't as if there wasn't a good reason why it had increased. Yesterday, Hyrkan had uploaded the battle footage of him fighting the large Thorn Lizard. The responses he got back was very favorable. It had been sufficient enough to drive up Hyrkan's price.

However, Hyrkan couldn't accept this situation at face value.

‘If it was me, I wouldn't bet this much.’

The merit of having Hyrkan join the public enlistment wasn't small.

It would be easier to gather additional members through Hyrkan's reputation. Moreover, the probability of succeeded the raid on the 1st try increased significantly.

Even if one considered those factors, Pelato's bet was ill-advised. Moreover, he probably hadn't given this offer to everyone. He probably gave it to Hyrkan only. If someone other than Hyrkan found out about this, there would be infighting within the group.

‘I'm sure there is something going on here.’

If Pelato had the capital to make such an offer, Pelato would have given it during the first meeting. Why was he so desperate now? It was most definitely strange to see him make such a reckless bet.

“Hmmm.”

Normally, he wouldn't touch such work when there might be a secret plot behind it.

The problem was Hyrkan was also in a bad spot.

‘I have to catch it.’

Currently, the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice's infamy was rising. The Raid teams that were capable of taking down this monster were finishing up their scheduled plans, and they would soon come up with new plans on what they would do.

The Corrupted monsters were still worth a lot. This was especially true for the highest level users with the Corrupted Items. It was a chance to obtain additional Corrupted Set items.

If a little bit more time passed, he was sure the 30 great guilds would move.

Of course, he had to catch it before them. If he wanted to personally take down the the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice, this was his only chance.

‘I have no choice.’

He had no choice to grab the dirty hand of the user, who was full of secret plans.

This was the reason why he was worried.

“The bastard's targeting priority is magic. If it is hit with magic, it will target the magicians. To draw the aggro from it, one has to deliver two consecutive effective blows to the bastard.”

There were 35 total users, which amounted to 6 parties.

They had all gathered there to catch the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice, who was making a mess of the Red Lake. Pelato stood in front of them as if he was delivering a speech, and he started explaining the plan for the Raid.

“This monster also has Fear. It will decrease everyone's Stats, and our movement will be slowed. So, please eat the candy. If you are exposed to the Fear, retreat to the back. Also, if you are exposed to the Fear and retreat to the back, you will receive a demerit. As your demerit starts to stack, you will receive penalty when we are distributing the ingredient coins and gems.”

Pelato was very serious as he gave his speech.

However, the content of his speech wasn't that special. If one was a user over level 100 in Warlord, these were instructions one would already know even if it wasn't said out loud to them. The participants expected there would be some special content to his speech, but the participants' expression became apathetic.

It was the same for Hyrkan.

‘He doesn't have any additional information. This means he only has the standard tactics to use in the attack.’

“Since we don't know what's beyond phase 1, let's play it by the book.”

Pelato spoke exactly what Hyrkan had been thinking. However, it wasn't as if Hyrkan was the only one, who was having such thoughts. Several party members put on an expression as if to say this was all to be expected.

However...

“Before the magic attack, we have to shave off as much defense off of the monster. We'll focus on the Armor Break. There will be 3 users assigned to the role of Strikers, and the three users will alternate with each other to attack the monster. The group will consist of Umyo Party's Diong, 1945 Party's Naple, and Hahoe Mask Hyrkan. The three of them will make up the group.”

At that point, Hyrkan couldn't help, but change his expression.

‘What?’

Hyrkan looked at Pelato through the eye holes of the Hahoe Mask. Pelato also looked at Hyrkan, and when their eyes met, Pelato turned his gaze away. He was most definitely avoiding Hyrkan's gaze.

‘Why am I assigned as a Striker?’

Once again, Hyrkan had doubts.

It was true that he could fill in the role of a Striker well. The Armor Break skill he had shown when taking down the Bear Warrior and Helm Ogre won him a lot of admiration. An average Striker wouldn't be able to put forth his name next to Hyrkan.

However, Hyrkan had done the Armor Break, since he was soloing. When it comes down to it, Hyrkan wasn't a Striker. Hyrkan didn't mind doing it, but this Raid team had 6 Strikers.

So why was he insisting on putting Hyrkan into the Striker group?

‘Is he trying to fuck me over?’

Of course, Hyrkan didn't like it.

Before he had returned to the past, it had been the same. The Striker position suited him the most. Hyrkan knew this. However, he also knew the dangers.

One had to stick to the body of the large monster to continuously attack. It was basically riding a sports car with no brakes.

Moreover, Hyrkan had recently displayed his strong power as a

Necromancer.

Hyrkan's eyes narrowed.

However, he didn't react.

‘All right.’

If this was Pelato's secret plan, it would be better to antagonize Pelato after he reveals his secret design. If he bothered him right now, Pelato could just deny it with his words.

‘I'll go along with it. For now...’

This was why Hyrkan allowed himself to be manipulated.

‘However, if you mess with me, it will cost you much more than your watch.’

10.

Ggiiiiiii!

It had been a while, since the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice had discovered a prey. It expressed its happiness.

Three tankers equipped with enormous armors and shields were in place in front of the monster.

Three hidden figures were on the other side watching this sight. It was Hyrkan and the two other Strikers, who were tasked with the same mission.

However, it wasn't the role of Tankers nor the Strikers to send out the first salvo.

“Ready your magic!”

Pelato, who was one of the tankers, yelled out. As if they were trying to encompass the surrounding, the magicians raised the magic they had finished casting. Each of their hands held either fire, ice, lightning or wind.

“Attack!”

When Pelato's command finally came down, ten magic spells headed towards the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice, which was running towards the Tankers.

Ten had been sent.

Eight of the ten magic spells hit the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice's body.

Keeeee!

The Corrupted Gray Cockatrice let out a shriek as it explicitly expressed its pain.

However, the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice was fine considering the number of magic that been used on its body. Parts of its body was blackened, and the gray feathers were burnt. Blood dripped out of the deep wounds. However, if one took into account of its big body, it didn't look like critical wounds. It only gave pain to the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice.

It was wounded just enough to stoke its anger.

The Corrupted Gray Cockatrice searched its surrounding with its eyes. It looked for the magicians, who had sent the magic spells.

Something came flying towards its beak.

Kwahng!

A hammer spun towards it as it let out lightning.

Keeeee, keeeee!

The Cockatrice immediately shook its head when it was hit by the hammer.

After hitting the beak, the hammer returned to its master.

“Ooh-rah-cha-cha!”

The hammer's owner was already close to the Cockatrice.

The Cockatrice was still shaking its head as it tried to get rid of the Stun effect. However, the Cockatrice was still trying to chase the magicians instead of the Tanker, who had swung his hammer.

However...

Puh-uhk!

After regaining his hammer once again, he brought down the hammer on the Cockatrice's body!

Keeeet!

The Cockatrice's head turned quickly towards the Tanker. The Tanker gritted his teeth as he immediately raised his shield.

Kwah-jeek!

As soon as he raised his shield, the Cockatrice's sharp beak impacted on the shield. If he had been slightly late, his body would have suffered the same fate as his shield.

Its power was immense. The shield had been pierced as the beak needed only couple centimeters more depth to break through the shield. The sharp part of the beak was dug in so deep that one could see through the shield.

‘I won't be able to hold on like this. The buffs aren't enough.’

“Thousand Geun Weight!”

The Tanker sensed he won't be able to resist the monster easily, so he used his Skill. His weight increased as he became rooted in place.

There was no retreat!

It seemed the beak attack on the Tanker's shield wasn't enough for the monster. It started to stomp with its foot.

Kwahng, kwahng!

The enormous monster didn't show any signs of holding back its strength. While the Tanker was blocking all of the Cockatrice's attack, the Strikers moved.

- The Hahoe Mask is moving.

- Everyone get ready!

The first one to move was Hyrkan.

When they saw Hyrkan move, the rest of the party members moved along with him. The Strikers on standby switched positions with the Tankers and Magicians.

Finally, Hyrkan had closed the distance with the Cockatrice. In a breath, he got on the Cockatrice's body using his swift movements.

Hyrkan's eyes surveyed the wounds on the Cockatrice's spine. He chose one of them as he stabbed his sword into the wound.

Poo-oohk!

It was a level 100 Unique item. Hyrkan boasted Strength stat that was higher than most swordsman, so his attack couldn't be weak.

Keeeee!

The Cockatrice had been distracted by the Tanker, but the power of the blow made the Cockatrice take notice.

At that moment...

Puh-uhng!

An enormous fireball impacted on the Cockatrice's head, and it popped like a water balloon.

The exploding ball of fire covered the entirety of the Cockatrice's face then it disappeared.

Of course, the Cockatrice's gaze headed towards the magician, who had used the magic. The monster's interest in Hyrkan disappeared, and Hyrkan was able to breathe.

‘Hoo-ooh!’

The Tanker predicted the Cockatrice's move, so he got in place. Hyrkan grabbed his embedded sword, and he waited for the next opportunity.

‘They are controlling the Aggro pretty well.’

The Aggro was being controlled much better than he thought it would be. The Tankers and Magicians had good chemistry. Also, Pelato's directions were easy to follow.

Of course....

‘I don't know how far we can go on like this.’

Of course, the first one or two pass went well for any Raids. Now they would have to repeat this process couple dozen times to

couple hundred times.

During this process, even one mistake would result in someone paying the price.

Hyrkan bit his lips. Of course, Hyrkan had no thoughts of bearing that price.

At that moment...

Kwahhng!

An enormous fireball took Hyrkan by surprise.

12.

Flame Strike magic.

It was a level 80 Rare rank magic. It was the main magic used by Flame magicians, who wanted to deal serious damage.

Basically, the magic boasted a strong striking power.

The Striker, who was on the back of the monster attempting an Armor Break, was touched by this powerful magic. It was the worst type of accident one could commit.

“Who sent that?”

Pelato, who had witnessed it from nearby, let out a desperate shout.

- I...I mixed up the signal.

A reply was given immediately.

“Get a hold of yourself!”

Pelato spat out another word. However, the situation only allowed limited conversation.

- What should we do?

- Give us the next order, commander!

If an accident happened, the situation usually turned in a state of emergency.

This was the case right now. The Cockatrice was hit by an unexpected attack, and it was heading towards the Mage. It was heading towards a direction where a Tanker couldn't be dispatched.

Normally, when one used magic, a Tanker was placed between the mage and the monster. The Tanker would immediately block the monster once it starts to chase the magician.

Basically, a Tanker couldn't block the Cockatrice right now.

There were only two answers to this situation.

- Reset?

- Retreat?

In this situation, they had to either run away or reset the Raid.

If they ran away, they all had to scatter. It was basically an announcement to give up on the battle.

Reset was basically returning to the initial condition of the Raid. In a situation like this, the magicians would send their magic towards the monster like they did in the beginning. There would be too many targets, so the Aggro would reset. The only problem with the reset was the fact that one couldn't guarantee Hyrkan's life, who was hanging off of the monster's back.

Hyrkan's item setting wasn't that high on magic defense, and his Stamina stat wasn't high either. If magic spells rained down on him, he wouldn't survive the experience.

‘Of course.....’

However, Pelato had already made his decision. He had already decided this course of action two days ago.

“Res.....”

They would reset.

The magicians would once again send their magic spells at once.

That was the plan, but.....

- I'll block it.

The situation went sideways.

Ten Skeleton Warriors suddenly appeared on the body of the running Cockatrice. The Skeleton Warriors that had appeared started to ruthlessly stab at the Cockatrice's body.

Keeeee!

The Cockatrice let out a long cry, and it started to roll on the ground.

The magicians, who were about to throw the magic spell in their

hand, swallowed their spit. Pelato also swallowed the word he was about to yell out.

- The situation has been straightened.

Only one person spoke within the silence.

- The bastard, who threw the magic by mistake, should stay out of this battle. If you don't, I'll consider PKing you.

Hyrkan spat out those words.

Chapter 90. Corrupted Elf (4)

13.

‘I almost died.’

Hyrkan distanced himself from the Cockatrice as the Skeleton Warriors bought some time for him. He thought about what just happened.

He didn't even have to think about it. He was sure the magic thrown by the magician had headed towards him. The accuracy was so spot on that he wanted to give praise to the magician's skill. If he exaggerated his compliment, he wanted to ask why the magician was a pitcher in the MLB. That was how accurate the magic hit its mark.

However, there was a reason why he was able to survive despite the attack.

‘I'm glad I was prepared.’

Preparation.

He had prepared for this situation. He had stacked the expensive candy, expensive gum, and even the pricey Snake Essence! He had kept all three of them in his mouth.

‘Still, my HP went down to around 30%.... If I hadn't invested in the Body Strengthening Skills, I would have died.’

Again, Pelato had underestimated Hyrkan's Stamina. Hyrkan hadn't skimped on the Body Alteration Skills.

There was the 'Skin Sewing' Skill that increased his passive defense, including an increased defense against magic. There was the 'False Heart' Skill that significantly increased his Stamina. Then, there was the 'Boiling Blood' Skill that increase the rate of HP recover and, at the same time, mitigated the HP lost from burns and blood loss.

He saw the true result of his investment into the Body Strengthening Skill Tree. It also helped that he had done his best to gather as many titles as he could. The titles were a big help in gaining a large Stamina Stat.

Anyways, he was alive.

Since he survived, Hyrkan had the right to take over the leadership role.

“Did I tell you before? If you move without my permission, your severed wrists will be the only thing uploaded to my youtube page.”

The 30 users all froze in place at Hyrkan's warning.

“The magician who threw the magic spell at me should especially take my words to heart.”

The magician who had attack Hyrkan was frozen like an ice statue. Pelato's expression also hardened.

‘Is it possible?’

From Pelato's perspective, Hyrkan's words didn't sound so innocent.

'Did he catch on.....'

Pelato was the commander, yet he was keeping his silence. Thus, the other members of the party couldn't act.

Everyone just glanced around and surveyed the situation.

The progress of battle in front of their eyes were ever-changing.

Keee, keee!

The Cockatrice ignored everyone, and it was busy getting rid of the Skeleton Warriors attached to its body.

Its fierce struggle dislodged the Skeleton Warriors from its body. When the Skeleton Warriors were thrown to the ground, it either

ruthlessly stepped on the Skeleton Warriors or pecked at them as if it was eating corn from the ground. The beak broke apart the Skeleton Warriors' skull.

The Skeleton Warriors were pretty adept at dodging its attack. At times, the Skeleton Warriors were able to stab the body of the Cockatrice. However, it would be impossible for the Skeleton Warriors to change the tide of battle all on their own. The number of Skeleton Warriors decreased rapidly. There had been 10 of them, but now there were only four of them left.

The countdown had started.

The four became three. The three would become two then one. The Cockatrice's attention would turn to others.

‘Don't we have to move now?’

‘We should change our formation.’

The party members kept looking at each other. They could continue to play this game of ice tag.

“Didn't I warn you? I told you not to move.”

However, Hyrkan didn't allow them to respond.

There was a reason why he did that.

‘I will never hand over the command post.’

Hyrkan decided he wanted to command this situation.

He had already confirmed that Pelato was gunning for Hyrkan. It would be crazy for him to hand over the role of commander to Pelato.

However, words were insufficient. He couldn't take the command just by flapping his lips.

He had to show them his skills.

'I show you what a real commander looks like.'

Hyrkan took out a gem. It was more pitch black than black. The gem containing the thick, black light was gripped by Hykran, transforming into a black, murky liquid.

Drip, drip.

The black murky water dropped to the liquid.

Koo-koo-koo!

The ground let out a cry as it shook.

Finally, a giant snake that boasted a length of 7 meters showed up. It was a Snake Golem.

The ingredient and the owner of the gem was the Black Anaconda!

There were many types of snake-type monsters in Warlord, but this particular one had the trick of squeezing its prey into two pieces.

When the snake appeared, Hyrkan gave his attack orders. In a flash, it slithered towards the Cockatrice.

Kwah-kwah-kwah!

The Snake Golem moved across the floor, its movement rough and boorish compared to the Black Anaconda.

However...

Keeee!

The Snake Golem was at a distance where the Cockatrice would have noticed it. However, it was still busy facing the Skeleton Warriors. In a flash, the Snake Golem encircled the Cockatrice. Its skill was surprisingly on par with a Black Anaconda.

“Hardening!”

Hyrkan immediately used the Hardeninig skill. The Golem made out of dirt hardened like a rock.

Koo-oohng!

The Cocatrice was unable to keep its balance, so its large body fell to the floor.

Several users held their breath when they saw this sight.

‘Such a method was possible?’

‘Fantastic!’

He used the Clay Play Skill to create a Snake Golem. The Snake Golem had encircled the target, and it had used the Hardening Skill.

It was an amazing combination.

They almost let out a sigh of admiration.

Keeee!

The Cockatrice, who was at the wrong end of this attack, was

letting out a screech. The Snake Golem was wrapped around the entire length of the Cockatrice's body, and it was having a hard time dislodging the Snake Golem, which had turned into stone.

Bboo-dook, bboo-dook!

Of course, one couldn't ignore the Cockatrice's power. Every time the Cockatrice struggled a crack formed on the Snake Golem.

They once again swallowed their spit as they continued to watch the sight.

‘Should we head in right now?’

‘Isn't our time to attack?’

The Cockatrice was being tied up perfectly.

At the same time, the countdown started. The Snake Golem could hold on for a finite amount of time. Even the users who weren't a Necromancer could see that time was running out.

There was less than 1 minute left.

In truth, this fact in itself was amazing. In a Boss Monster Raid, a Boss monster had been restricted of its movement for 1 minute. This wasn't something a user could do.

Normally, this was the time used to prepare. The magicians would prepare magic spells, the Strikers would stick to the monster to get rid of the armor, or the party would change formation.

However, no one could move right now.

‘What do we do?’

‘Should we move?’

‘Who's giving the orders?’

They were told not to move. Hyrkan had said so.

During all of this, Hyrkan was operating his voice talk program.

“Choose.”

He tried a 1 on 1 chat instead of a group chat.

- What?

Pelato was his conversation partner.

“Choose whether you will fight the Cockatrice with me or do you want to fight me with the Cockatrice.”

- What are you.....

Boo-doohk, booh-doohk!

While the conversation continued, the continuous struggle of the Cockatrice caused cracks all over the body of the Snake Golem.

They didn't have a minute. They were down to seconds.

Pelato was getting desperate. Hyrkan continued speaking in a calm manner.

“Who incited this?”

At that moment, Pelato made his decision. He could tell Hyrkan wasn't a normal user by his appearance. Moreover, he already knew about Pelato's secret plans. In the end, if Hyrkan decided to actively interfere in this raid, Pelato would never be able to catch the Cockatrice.

Moreover, he wasn't in a position where he could take down Hyrkan.

He didn't even need to list the pros and cons of doing this.

- A...Apollo. It was the Apollo Guild.

Hyrkan immediately switched to the voice talk option and yelled out to everyone.

“Magicians get your magic spells ready. Priests give full buffs to the Strikers. After the magic strikes, the Strikers will run in.”

Hyrkan had yelled out the instructions instead of the commander. Normally, they would just ignore any order that didn't originate from the commander.

However, an answer came as if they had been expecting this.

- This is the West magician team. We are short on time.
- Right! If we start casting now, we need at least 1 minute!
- This is the priest team. Do you not realize how long it takes to cast a full round of buffs?

They needed more time!

Hyrkan had heard those words countless of times during his raids. He smirked as he spoke.

He had to buy time.

Hyrkan was very familiar with that work.

“I'll buy some time.”

Hyrkan immediately summoned new Skeleton Warriors.

Moreover, there was a specific Skeleton in the middle of the group.

[Special Ability 'Chivalry' was activated.]

He had the Skeleton Knight.

14.

Storm Hunter's Storm Princess. Red Bulls guild's Matador. Hydra guild's First Head.

There was a similarity between these users beyond the fact that they were leaders of the largest guilds in the 30 Great guilds. They were all Swordsman class users, and they always lead from the frontline. They commanded their troops while being always nearest to the monster.

At this point, anyone would ask the question.

Wasn't it too dangerous for the most important party in the group to fight in the frontline?

However, this was the wrong question to ask. They were considered to be important precisely because they fought in the frontline.

Basically, the positions that received the most attentions were either the Strikers or the Tankers. Those in the frontline decided whether a Raid failed or not.

When one was being commanded by a skilled Striker or Tanker, the Raid felt different.

Currently, it was like that.

“Did you see its body shake?”

- It did?

“I'm sure it is a sign that it is going into phase 3.”

- What do we do? We don't know what happens in phase 3.

“Since we don't know it, we do it by the book. The Tankers will be placed at the North, South, East, and West. This is in preparation for an unexpected situation. The magicians will ready

their most powerful magic for a single strike.”

- Where should we sent the magic spells?

“I'll decide. My cute Skeletons are sacrificing their bodies to stall it, so if you miss, you better be ready to take responsibility.”

- Yes, boss!

It was like the ocean with violent waves, and Hyrkan was basically the buoy floating atop the ocean. Hyrkan commanded on top of the Cockatrice's back. His command skill was so great that everyone participating in the raid felt a feeling of admiration.

The evidence was all over the Cockatrice's body.

When Hykran fell off the Cockatrice's body, he immediately used the Skeleton Warriors to divert the aggro. Its entire body was covered in wounds. The armor it had been wearing was gone, even its gray leather was peeled off. Its appearance was appalling.

It was evidence that Hyrkan's command had been flawless. Now the Cockatrice basically had no defense.

“We are starting the countdown.”

The Skeleton Warriors, who had been acting as bait, retreated as Hyrkan started the countdown.

Hyrkan counted down to zero! It happened when that word was spoken!

Koo-uhhhhh!

Three enormous flaming bears charged towards the Gray Cockatrice.

Several dozen ice spears formed about the Cockatrice's head, and the spears plummeted towards it.

For the finale, clouds formed above the Cockatrice's head and the black clouds spat out yellow lightnings.

Gwah-roo-roohng!

Everyone's vision turned yellow when the level 120 Unique rank magic, Mega Thunderbolt, fell from the sky.

The ground almost split from the power of the continuous magic spells. The surrounding landscape wasn't able to hold out.

Keeeeee!

Even being assaulted by such attacks, the Cockatrice let out a cry as it let its presence known.

- Sick. I'm sick of this.

- Its defense should be almost 0. What kind of bastard could survive such a magical barrage?

- What kind of bastard? Of course, it's a monster.

The party members spoke to each other as they watched the sight. Hyrkan made a tight fist once again.

Drip, drip!

Black liquid dripped down through his clenched fist.

Koo-koo-koo!

The ground shook, and a Snake Golem immediately appeared.

The Snake Golem quickly maneuvered over the rocky terrain, and it was very close to the Cockatrice.

The Cockatrice turned its head to look at the Snake Golem. The unsightly monster only had malice left within it. The Cockatrice used its large beak to peck at the Snake Golem's body.

Kwah-jeek!

The Cockatrice's beak was embedded deep within the Snake Golem's body.

At the same time, the Snake Golem moved its body to encircle the Cockatrice's body.

“Harden!”

Soon, the Golem had turned into stone and the Cockatrice fell to the floor. The Cockatrice struggled, and the Golem's body immediately started to crack. Hyrkan yelled out his instructions.

“Thirty seconds. Strikers will be in charge of the finale.”

- Roger!

After replying, the frightening Strikers with full buff started to move. They were going to end this. The Strikers were always closest to danger, so they were very suspicious of commanders. If they didn't trust the commander, then they wouldn't move.

When Hyrkan's word ended, the Strikers ran immediately towards the monster. It was evidence that showed the Strikers 100% trusted Hyrkan's command skills.

‘We just need to finish it off.’

He had been perfect in his command.

‘I'll have to request a reimbursement from Pelato for all the money I spent today..’

Hyrkan had just completed his calculations when his eyes picked up something.

Poohk!

He saw the scene of an arrow flying towards the Cockatrice, and the arrow was planted on the Cockatrice's body. A single arrow shot had ended the life of the very tenacious Cockatrice.

- What?

- Who shot the arrow?

- No user in Warlord uses a bow!

Everyone was taken aback.

Hyrkan was the only one who wasn't taken aback. He was running towards the direction of where the arrow had come from.

A sound was heard in Hyrkan's ears.

[The Corrupted Elf has appeared. Please track him down.]

The announcement that helped the Quest Progress was heard.

15.

Heh-bibin was in a good mood.

‘The situation is finally on the mend.’

Big Smile had been backed into a wall by the Triple Wing, but recently, they had come across some favorable news. They had developed a live channel program involving a popular Chinese actor. It would be shown on public television in China.

In truth, this program had been long in the making, but they hadn't been able to get anyone to back it. They had started airing it recently, and the result was better than expected.

Moreover, there was a lull between the war with the Triple Wing. The two guilds still had a bad relationship, but for now, they avoided getting into a war that would lead their guilds into life or death situation.

It wasn't as if they had come to a special agreement. It came to be because they heard rumors indicating the Underfoot guilds were

gunning for the spots occupied by the two guild. They didn't want to become sacrificial lambs in these trouble times! This was how they came to a tacit agreement.

‘If we build up our fighting power again, we'll be able to climb to the top again.’

Of course, it wasn't as if all the problems had disappeared. Still, it gave them time to rebound so Heh-bibin was thankful.

He was in a good mood until he had heard the news.

- Excuse me. Do you perhaps know about this?

The employee in charge of keeping the Big Smile guild's items in storage was called Hae-bibin.

“What are you talking about?”

- When we last spoke, you told me to loan out items to the Apollo guild if they asked. Do you remember?

Apollo guild.

Heh-bibin's face crumpled a little bit at the word, then his face relaxed again.

“Yes. Yes, I did.”

Heh-bibin's weakness was being exploited by the Apollo guild. He tried to give some preferential treatments towards the Apollo guild. This was why they had loaned out the items. He hand made an extra effort so the Apollo guild could get the loaned items.

Truthfully, he thought no problem would arise out of it. The biggest problem that could happen in loaning out the items is the loss of the item. If he considered Apollo's financial coffer, he didn't need to worry about that.

So why was it being mentioned right now?

- Recently, the Apollo guild borrowed a lot of Unique items.

“Did he perhaps lose all of them?”

At this point, Heh-bibin wished Apollo had lost all the items. If so, he could secretly tie off their relationship.

- That isn't it..... It seems the Unique items were moved to the Red Lake.

Unfortunately, Heh-bibin's wish went up in smoke.

“What?”

Red Lake.

Of course, Heh-bibin knew about that location.

‘Why did the Apollo guild go to the Red Lake?’

Heh-bibin tilted his head in confusion as he thought about the level of the core users in the Apollo guild. It was a location that was accessible to the Apollo Guild, but Apollo's personality didn't suit that location.

First, the Apollo guild couldn't act like he was a king in that location. If Apollo acted like he did in the regular field, he would be smashed into pieces at the Red Lake.

Moreover, Apollo didn't have the skill required to hunt there.

‘No. That pig bastard has no reason to go there..’

Items weren't the only thing required to succeed in a Boss monster raid. One's own personal skill was important. Apollo didn't have the requisite skills. If he went to the Red Lake himself, he would only realize that he was trash. All he was capable of doing was eating EXP from the back.

At that moment, Heh-bibin suddenly remember something.

It was the latest news.

‘Maybe.....’

A Corrupted Gray Cockatrice had appeared at the Red Lake, and someone was gathering an attack force to take it down.

Moreover....

‘.....He is trying to catch the Hahoe Mask?’

There was new that the Hahoe Mask had appeared there.

Once he combined the two news, it made Heh-bibin frown. A terrible hypothetical situation appeared in his mind.

‘Maybe. No way...’

What if Apollo was using the borrowed Unique items from Big Smile to catch the Hahoe mask?

If so, who would take the blame for the incident?

‘.....no way.’

Heh-bibin desperately tried to contact Apollo.

Chapter 91. Elf's Keepsake (1)

1.

- Hahoe Mask! What the hell are you doing?

The voice rang in his ear, but Hyrkan ignored it. He was focused solely on one thing. He concentrated on the being with pointy ears, who was running away with great agility.

- Hahoe Mask!

As if he was trying to interfere with Hyrkan, Pelato kept yelling out his name. In the end, Hyrkan spoke in a low voice as if he was mumbling.

“Hey, you aren't in a position to yell at me. Just clean up the situation over there for now.”

- What? What are you talking about?

Hyrkan's words were short on explanation. Pelato had a very natural reaction.

However, Hyrkan didn't have the time to give a long explanation. Moreover, there was no reason to. He wasn't required to do so.

“If you don't like that option, I can reveal how you tried to fuck

me over after being hired by the Apollo guild. Why don't you think about what would occur if that happens?"

Pelato finally closed his mouth. Silence finally descended upon Hyrkan, and he once again put in all his effort to chase after the Elf.

The Elf was much slower than he thought it would be. The really swift Elves were impossible for users to follow in the forest. Hyrkan had prior experience in chasing after Elves, so he was well aware of this fact.

Hyrkan had a hunch.

‘It wants to be caught.’

Warlord was cooperating with him, so he could smoothly progress in his Quest. It was very rare to receive cooperation from the game, since Warlord was usually an inhospitable game.

Of course, Hyrkan wasn't going to refuse the help. This kind of cooperation from the game was rare. If he refused such help here, a chance like this would never present itself to him again.

Still, it wasn't an easy task to catch the Elf. An average user would never be able to catch it. The speed wasn't the problem. The problem was the location. When one ran full force inside a forest, it was like running an obstacle course with a blindfold on.

‘All right. I'll catch you.’

Hyrkan was experienced in running away from various people for his survival, so this wasn't a problem for him.

The distance between the two was steadily getting narrower.

Of course, the Elf realized this fact, and it suddenly turned its head. This was the first time Hyrkan had seen this Elf's face.

‘I knew it.’

The escaping elf's face was different from the faces of Elves he had seen before. There was a black tattoo on his face..... No, it looked more like a scar than a wound, and there was something black within it. The sense of beauty one felt when seeing an Elf couldn't be felt from this one.

Still, the Elf's eyes were striking. The Elves usually had emerald colored eyes, but its eyes were dyed black now. The contrast was too stark.

He knew the definition of the word, but this sight made him clearly feel what the word, Corrupted, meant.

It also meant he had gotten close enough to be able to confirm the color of its eyes.

If things progressed along this line, Hyrkan would catch the Elf. This was Hyrkan's intention and choice.

Now it was up to the Elf to make its own choice.

Will it just let itself be caught? Or will it fight?

The Elf made a decision.

Poo-hoop!

Suicide. This was the decision made by the Corrupted Elf. The Elf showed the intention of taking the truth to the grave. It wasn't going to tell anyone about his master's secrets.

The result of its choice became immediately apparent. The Elf threw up blood, and it fell like a puppet with its string cut. Its momentum made him roll couple dozen times across the ground, and his body was in rough shape.

Hyrkan bit his lips when he saw the sight.

It was an unpleasant sight. Moreover, he didn't like what he had to do now. He took out a pouch from his bosom. He had carried it around like a treasure.

The Elf glared at Hyrkan when he approached it. Hyrkan avoided the Elf's gaze. The Elf was sprawled out like a corpse, and Hyrkan

poured the silver liquid on the Elf's head.

When the silver liquid touched the Elf's head, it took shape to fit around the Elf's head.

The Circlet of Purification!

The item started purifying the power of Corruption that had been dominating the Elf's nature and intellect.

There must have been a recoil. The corpse-like body of the Elf started to shake as if there was an earthquake.

Kool-luhk, kool-luhk!

The Elf suddenly threw up black liquid. Then it closed its eyes tight, and it let out a moan.

Eventually, the Elf opened its eyes again, and its emerald eyes were revealed. The power of Corruption that had been controlling the Elf was gone. This was the surest evidence that proved the Elf had regained its sanity.

The Elf's eyes looked at Hyrkan. Hyrkan didn't say anything. He waited for the Elf to speak.

However, the Elf couldn't speak. It opened its mouth, but the sound of its voice never made it past its throat.

At that moment, it was as if the Elf had suddenly remembered something. The Elf squeezed out the last strength it had left to tap its left chest region with its hand.

That was it. After performing the minor movement with his hand, the Elf closed its eyes, and its body slumped. Its body immediately started to shrivel up like an old tree.

Hyrkan laughed bitterly as he saw this sight.

‘The game is quite romanticized. It really is a romanticized game.’

After letting out his bitter laugh, Hyrkan took out a note and map from the Elf's pocket.

2.

‘Shit.’

After ending the conversation with Hyrkan, Pelato looked around his surrounding. The nearby party members were staring at him. They were requesting for an answer from Pelato.

Pelato couldn't come up with anything.

‘What's should I say?’

The current situation was a mess.

An arrow had suddenly killed the Cockatrice when the group was about to kill it. Moreover, when the arrow flew in, Hyrkan had immediately chased after the being, who had shot the arrow.

In this situation, the rest of the party could only look on.

Moreover, wasn't Hyrkan the one who had been commanding the party up until now?

‘What does he want me to do?’

Anyways, the ball was in Pelato's court now. He was the one, who had planned this Raid. If there was a problem, he had to take the responsibility.

Moreover, he was in a bad spot. Hyrkan knew his weak point. If this business became known to the Golden Brothers, Pelato would be unconditionally kicked out from the guild.

If it ended at an expulsion, he would be quite fortunate.

However, if he was involved in a scandal, no guild would take him in. He would basically have to give up on this game. Without the help of a large guild, one couldn't progress in this world. This

was the reality of Warlord these days.

At the very least, he had to bark when Hyrkan said for him to bark. Hyrkan said Pelato had to take care of this matter, so he had to take care of this matter.

“Didn't everyone get their EXP?”

At Pelato's words, everyone checked whether they gained their EXP or not.

“We got it.”

“Isn't this much more than expected? I received a considerable amount.”

Their EXP had increased. It basically meant everyone there had a claim to the monster.

“Since we gained the EXP, the monster's corpse is owned by us.”

The rights to the Cockatrice's corpse was reserved for the Raid party.

They received EXP and the Items. They hadn't lost either one of them.

Pelato reinforced this point. There were some hiccups along the way, but the benefit they had targeted had been earned.

“What about the Hahoe Mask?”

Of course, he had to answer for the sudden disappearance of Hyrkan. The people gathered here weren't common users. Hyrkan had immediately responded to the situation. It meant Hyrkan had expected this to happen.

In other words, the party members wanted to know why they hadn't been told about the situation if Hyrkan knew events would turn out like this.

They wanted an explanation.

“He has a Quest.”

After a brief brainstorm, Pelato came up with a short answer.

“Hahoe Mask joined the raid in the first place, because it was part of his Quest. He is currently progressing in the Quest right now.”

The answer was plausible. After hearing the explanation, all the users nodded their head, and it seemed they had accepted it.

‘Now that I think about it the Hahoe Mask is quite far along the Main Scenario Quest.’

‘Wait a moment. Does this mean this monster was related to the Main Scenario Quest? It is a Corrupted monster, so the possibility is high.’

‘If I chase after the Hahoe Mask right now, will I be able to join his Main Scenario Quest? Should I chase after him?’

The party members started to think about how they could interject themselves into the current scenario. The commotion within the group lessened.

Pelato, who had been looking at the party members, swallowed the sigh that was about to come out.

‘This is all tangled up.’

He had given the obvious answer, but the answer he had given wasn't advantageous to Pelato.

He had made another mess. Pelato had implied there was a prior agreement with Hyrkan, yet that wasn't true. If Hyrkan disputed his words, Pelato would be labeled a liar.

‘Now I'm at the mercy of the Hahoe Mask no matter what.’

A equals B.

Their relationship crystallized at that moment.

3.

When Hyrkan returned, the Cockatrice's body had been dismantled, and it had already melted away.

Hyrkan immediately held a conversation with Pelato at an isolated location.

“You received consumable items from the Apollo guild. How much do you have left?”

“Quite a lot.”

“Since you tried to fuck me over, you should give that to me as a repayment.”

Pelato let out a sigh inside as he heard Hyrkan's words. There were a lot of consumable items left, because Hyrkan had directed the Raid. If one put a price on those items, it was quite a lot. Yet Hyrkan wanted it all?

It was a waste, but he had no choice.

“All right. I'll agree to that.”

Currently, Hyrkan was holding Pelato's life line. Pelato fervently wished Hyrkan wouldn't ask for anything bigger.

“Also.....”

However, Hyrkan wasn't done speaking. Pelato bit his lips before he even heard what Hyrkan was going to say.

“You can keep all the merits regarding this Raid, Pelato.”

“What?”

At that moment Pelato couldn't believe what he had just heard.

“Are you saying you will allow me to take credit for the result of today's Raid? Is that what you mean?”

Hyrkan nodded his head.

“H...how come?”

This was most definitely to his advantage, yet Pelato started asking questions in suspicion instead of thanking Hyrkan.

He expected to be beat, yet a sweet piece of chocolate had been put into his mouth. In some aspect, his reaction was to be expected.

“I have no reason to ruin everything for you. I'll summarize it for you. You tried to kill me at the request of the Apollo guild, and I found out about it mid-raid. During the raid, you did nothing, and I commanded the Raid. Now that I have your weak-point I don't have a reason to blab about it.”

From Pelato's perspective, the arrangement wasn't that ideal. However, Pelato didn't frown.

Hyrkan added more to the explanation.

“As you probably know by know, I have a lot of enemies. In such a situation, what would I gain by embarrassing a skilled user from the Golden Brothers?”

“I...I guess so.”

“Moreover, it isn't as if I'll make any money from embarrassing you. It'll just created a rift between the Golden Brothers and me.”

Pelato quickly nodded his head.

At that moment...

“All right. You can keep the footage of this raid.”

Hyrkan had given him a big present.

‘Huhk!’

Pelato forgot about the mess he was in, and he had a surprised expression on his face. He looked ridiculous from an outside point of view.

This demonstrated how big of a present he had been given by Hyrkan.

No matter how you looked at it the Boss Monster Raid footage had a lot of value. Most footage brought in small amount of money, but if one was lucky, it could net a lot of money. Moreover, the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice that had appeared at the Red Lake was an attractive Boss monster.

Also, this footage could be put into his resume. This Raid wasn't done with the experienced members of a large guild. This was an attack party made out of random volunteers. He had formed the party, and he had shown off his ability to lead such a party. This could be a feather in Pelato's cap.

Of course, the latter half of the Raid was commanded by Hyrkan.

If Hyrkan asked for the rights to the footage, Pelato would have handed it over. It was a given.

Yet Hyrkan was willing to just give him the rights?

“Really? I can put the footage of this Raid on my page.”

“Of course. However, it isn't for free.”

“What do you want?”

“You made a wise decision.”

Hyrkan answered in a vague manner. However, Pelato was able to see through to the meaning behind Hyrkan's words.

“Of course. From this day forward, I won't participate in any ventures that would cause you harm. I promise on my character.”

It seemed Hyrkan was satisfied with the answer. He nodded his head. Pelato also had a satisfied smile as he looked at Hyrkan.

“Ah.”

At that moment, it seemed Hyrkan had remembered something. He immediately handed over a note to Pelato.

“This is the list of candies I had to eat, because of the magic thrown by your magician. It is quite a lot.”

Pelato's face stiffened when he received the note. The consumable items listed were very expensive. These consumable

items had great effect, and not even members of the raid teams of large guilds used it readily.

“Of course, you should be willing to shoulder the burden. Right?”

Pelato put on an awkward smile.

This was how the Corrupted Gray Cockatrice Raid came to an end.

4.

‘You son of a bitch, Apollo. If you aren't going to use the knife yourself, then you should just fuck off. Why are you causing me so much trouble?’

The man was skin and bones. He had sunken eyes, and there were dark circles under them.

His entire body screamed out the fact that he was someone addicted to a game. The item essential to a game addict, caffeine, was in front of Ahn-jaehyun. He was drowned within his thoughts.

‘Apollo is greedy, and he is an ill-tempered pig. Still, he isn't dumb enough to put in this much effort and capital to catch me.’

This thoughts centered around Apollo.

Before he returned to the past, he had been deeply involved with Apollo. At the time, Apollo had frothed at the mouth to catch Ahn-jaehyun, but he could understand the reasoning behind it.

However, that was before he returned to the past. Currently, he didn't have a good relationship with the Apollo guild, but he hadn't thought it was this bad.

It was true that Ahn-jaehyun had fucked over the guild members of the Apollo guild. However, it should have been minor damage from the perspective of Apollo.

Of course, if one considered Apollo's dirty personality, one could see why he was pursuing his revenge. Still, Apollo was spending a lot of money. It was money worth the annual salary of a new employee. Ahn-jaehyun couldn't understand it.

‘Still, where did that pig get all those decent Unique items?’

What especially vexed Ahn-jaehyun was the part where the Apollo guild had loaned out the Unique Items.

At first, when he heard about Pelato loaning out the Unique items, he thought Golden Brother or an affiliated guild was loaning the items out.

Only a guild of that size had the capacity to do it.

‘He said Apollo guild had directly loaned those Items out. That's impossible.’

It basically meant Apollo guild wasn't at a level where they could pull this off.

Apollo guild wasn't small. They also had financial backing. If one looked at the users affiliated with the guild, their level were on the high side compared to the entire population of Warlord.

However, they weren't a guild with enough in-game supply to be able to loan Items out to others.

In the end, it meant there was someone else that had loaned out the Items to the Apollo guild.

‘What a troublesome bastard.’

Ahn-jaehyun stopped worrying at this point.

In truth, he couldn't find out what the Apollo guild had done unless he could capture and torture Apollo for answers.

Ahn-jaehyun could only do one thing. He could prepare.

‘The Big Smile bastards were also like this. I haven't done anything big yet, but they are already messing with me. Do I have honey rubbed all over my body?’

Slowly, the larger guilds were trying to keep Ahn-jaehyun in check.

Ahn-jaehyun's goal was to fight them by himself.

‘All right. Just wait for me a little bit. Even if you guys don't want to, I'll fight you guys.’

However, it would be impossible for him to fight them right now. Until he could grow his strength, he needed forces that would help him.

He had won over Red Bulls and Pelato to his side. If it was the Golden Brothers, it was big enough that the Apollo guild wouldn't mess with them. Unexpectedly, Pelato might turn into a decent shield.

Of course, his main intention was to grow his strength.

Ahn-jaehyun thought about the Elf's keepsake.

There had been a map, and a note. He couldn't decipher the content. He probably had to visit Ahimbree, Chieftain Drah or Maeung to find out more about it.

However, he could guess at the identity of the map even if he couldn't verify it right now.

‘There is a great chance that this is a Dungeon Map.’

The map would lead him to something. Of course, he had no idea if this something was a monster or a treasure.

“If something big appears this time.... If something like a Corrupted Destroyer's Necklace drops, I would go to the streets of Myeongdong, and dance in my underwear. Will this lead to something big?”

The only thing he wished for was a treasure.

Chapter 92. Elf's Keepsake (2)

5.

He was a magician that represented the Stormhunter guild. At that moment, Hatch was feeling regret.

‘Shit.’

Hatch's gaze headed towards his leader, Storm Queen Shir. The always beautiful woman seemed to be in a foul mood. In truth, she was a woman, who usually didn't have a bright expression on her face. Currently, she had on such a ferocious expression that no one dared to crack a joke.

‘Why did I have to bring that up?’

Hatch had carelessly let slip some words.

Of course, Hatch didn't think he said anything that would offend Shir... He hadn't called her a spinster, who never had a boyfriend before! He hadn't said something inflammatory like that.

He really said something innocuous.

‘Why do I have to suffer like this because of the Hahoe Mask?’

Hahoe Mask.

Most Warlord users knew of his name by now. When Hatch saw a uploaded vid with him in it, he unconsciously spoke about it.

'Hey, the Hahoe Mask's hunting video is up.'

That was all Hatch had said.

The problem was Shir had immediately reacted to those words. After checking the footage, her expression changed. She gave off a murderous intent as she spat out her words.

“Why is he ignoring the love calls we sent? Why is he hunting with a minor user from the Golden Brothers? Why is the Hahoe Mask keep turning down our requests?”

At that moment, the members of Stormhunter's Raid team were gathered around Shir, and they kept their mouths shut. They would experience a huge calamity if they agitated Shir when she was in a foul mood.

However, Shir's mood didn't show any signs of improving. After some time passed, the other members glared at Hatch with resentment.

'Why did you have to open your big mouth? Why did you have to create such an atmosphere?'

From Hatch's perspective, he really felt regret over his action.

However, he couldn't take out his anger on anyone. There was only one thing he could do in his current situation.

‘Hahoe Mask. If you join our guild, you are dead.’

He enthusiastically cussed out the Hahoe Mask.

6.

Hyrkan had been running diligently when he stopped for a moment.

‘Is someone calling me?’

Hyrkan turned to look, and his vision didn't pick up anyone. He thought someone had called out his name, but of course, he didn't hear any voices.

Hyrkan shook his head from side to side.

‘Some bastard must be talking smack about me.’

Accompanying that brief thought, Hyrkan's gaze headed towards a peak of a particular mountain. The peak of the mountain was shaped oddly. The peak looked like a bird's head. It was very

similar in appearance to an eagle's head.

‘I'm almost there.’

Eagle Mountain.

This was a location where monsters between level 80 and 90 appeared. Amongst the users, this location had long been a popular hunting ground.

Of course, this wasn't Hyrkan's destination.

‘I have to head northeast from the Eagle Mountain.’

Hyrkan took out a note from his pocket. There were words on the bottom of the page that hadn't been there originally.

‘I saved a lot of time when all of this was resolved by the Maeung.’

The owner of the handwriting was Bulkas Ranger's Captain, Maeung.

The first person Hyrkan had visited with the Elf's Keepsake was the Maeung. He planned on visiting the Maeung, Drah and Ahimbree in that order. If he was unlucky, he wouldn't get any answer from all three of them. Fortunately, he got an immediate answer from his first visit. Maeung spoke about the map and the

note.

“If the Corrupted Elf, who betrayed the Baheim tribe, gave this to you with his dying breath, then the location listed here must be related to those bastards. The probability is high.”

“Can you decipher this map and note?”

“I don't know about the map, but I can immediately translate the content of the note.”

Maeung immediately translated the content of the note.

“The place where the eagle watches. The place is surrounded by blue mists, and there is a secret village between them.”

‘Uh?’

When he heard those words, he immediately knew where the village was located at.

“I don't know where this place is located at. The clues are too vague.”

This was why Hyrkan spoke with confidence.

“I'll go find and visit this place.”

“You will?”

“Aren't I the only one available right now to do this job? Of course, I believe this is a job I should do.”

Maeung was deeply moved by his words. He patted Hyrkan's shoulder.

“Thank you.”

[Quest 'Elf's Keepsake' has started.]

It had been two days since he received the Quest from Maeung.

Hyrkan looked at the Eagle Mountain. He followed the direction where the Eagle's head was looking towards to. It was looking towards the northeast.

‘I'm sure that's the Blue Mist Forest.’

The Eagle was looking towards a location where blue mists obscured the surrounding.

Those were words that described the Blue Mist Forest. He had never visited the location, but Hyrkan remembered the place.

It was a hunting ground for level 100 to level 130. The difficulty level of this hunting ground was much higher compared to the hunting grounds of similar level.

The reason why the Blue Mist Forest was difficult was the existence of humanoid monsters called the Smogrians. Its body was mainly made out of blue fog. It didn't have strong offense or defense, but they were similar to the Undead type monsters. They had a powerful regeneration ability. Moreover, it was very difficult to sense their presence within the Blue Mist Forest.

In fact, it was hard for users in the same party to keep track of each other within the Blue Mist Forest. It was inevitable for this place to be difficult.

This was why no one went there.

Most users avoided going to this hunting ground, and in the past, Hyrkan had no reason to visit this location.

However, it was different for him right now. There were multiple reasons why Hyrkan had to visit the Blue Mist Forest.

‘I have to hurry up and get there.’

Quest? Of course, it was one of the reasons why he wanted to get there. However, he had an additional reason.

‘I have to get there before some other bastard eats my Title!’

The Blue Mist Forest region had been inaccessible, because of the Block Field. This was the reason why the Eagle Mountain was a popular hunting ground for users. The Block Field basically prevented any higher level monsters from entering the field.

When Hyrkan received the quest to go to this location, the Block Field had been cancelled.

If he was the first one to reach the location, he would be able to earn the Titles.

“Hoo-ooh!”

Hyrkan let out his breathe, and he started to run again.

7.

[You've earned the Title 'Visitor of the Blue Mist Forest'.]

[You've earned the Title 'Discoverer of the Blue Mist Forest'.]

The moment he heard the Title Announcement Hyrkan put on a big smile.

Hyrkan immediately check the Title Option.

[Visitor of the Blue Mist Forest]

Title Effect : Stamina +3, Magic Power +3

[Discoverer of the Blue Mist Forest]

Title Effect : Strength +10, Intelligence +10

The Titles had better Options than he thought it would have.

‘This is why users put their lives on the line for the Titles. This is the taste.’

If he looked at it from a strictly numerical perspective, he had just earned Stats equivalent to gaining 5 levels in one sitting. Currently, it took Hyrkan 3 days to level up once. So this was quite the boon for him.

However, his happiness ended there.

‘So what do I have to do here?’

It was hard to even think of this place as a forest. The blue fog was everywhere, and it tamped down the happiness he had felt when earning the Blue Mist Forest Titles.

‘I’m pretty sure this place was never mentioned before.’

The Main Scenario Quest route within Hyrkan's head didn't have the Blue Mist Forest as a destination.

Of course, the Main Scenario had several routes. Hyrkan couldn't remember every one of those routes. If he had such good memory, he would have studied hard during his school days. He would have entered a good college, and he would be living a completely different life.

Still, he remembered most of the important parts.

However, the word, Blue Mist Forest, didn't ring a bell within his memory.

‘Is this perhaps an Event Quest?’

There was a possibility this was an Event Quest. This would be an Event Quest specifically made for those progressing through the Main Scenario Quest. The expensive items related to the Main Scenario Quest.... It was the Chronicle Rare. The Rewards that might be given may be Chronicle Ranked items.

He would avoid a loss if one came out. It would be a jackpot.

On the other hand, if a Quest route that he was unfamiliar with shows up, it would cause considerable amount of trouble for him.

Of course, the fact that he had to finish this particular Quest didn't change.

Hyrkan once again checked the content of the Quest.

[Elf's Keepsake]

- Quest Rank : Unique

- Quest Level Range : Over level 100

- Quest Content : Find the location being pointed by the Corrupted Elf's Keepsake. Find out Anuah's secret.

- Quest Reward : Someone's Keepsake.

The pressure within Hyrkan's chest increased by a lot.

‘This is really endless.’

He had to find the place indicated by the Keepsake, and he had to find the secret! It was a really open ended instruction.

Moreover, the reward was 'Someone's Keepsake.'

This matter wasn't funny at all.

‘Well, Warlord is always like this.’

However, Hyrkan had only one choice when standing in front of a Quest.

Complete the Quest!

If he didn't complete this quest, it would be impossible for him to progress any further.

Hyrkan organized his situation.

Hyrkan had to battle in this place using every method available to him.

Moreover, Hyrkan had never faced the monsters that appear within the Blue Mist Forest.

Since it said to find a secret, he had to brace himself for the eventuality of combing through the Blue Mist Forest.

If he combined all these facts, it became apparent what Hyrkan had to do.

Hyrkan threw 3 Skeleton Fragments.

‘Shall I get acclimated to this place first?’

Battle.

That is what Hyrkan had to do now.

8.

They were human shaped monsters made out of Blue Mist. A gold colored blade arced swiftly towards the monster's head.

Kwahng!

The sword obliterated the Smogrian's head. If this was a person, it would have been a critical wound or a deathblow.

However, the Smogrian still moved well without its head. In fact, the neck with its head removed was bubbling. The bubbles formed, and it started to harden in due time. Its head was regrowing.

This was the time to ruthlessly attack the monster before its head could reform.

However, Hyrkan ignored the one without its head. He moved towards another monster.

He was well aware of the Smogrian's regenerative ability.

Ddul-goo-ruhk, ddul-goo-ruhk!

However, Hyrkan had put his trust in his Skeleton Warriors. They would finish the monster.

It was as if they reacted to Hyrkan's trust. Two Skeleton Warriors appeared from the fog, and they started stabbing the headless body of the Smogrian.

Kwahng, kwahng!

The sword swung by the Skeleton Warriors ruthlessly broke down the Smogrian's body. The blows were that powerful.

During all of this, Hyrkan had demolished another head of a Smogrian, and he was moving on to the next target.

‘Chet.’

However, the thick fog prevented Hyrkan from moving farther away. The fog was so thick that he was barely able to see the burning eyes of the Skeleton Warriors. Of course, it was impossible to check how many Smogrians there were.

‘It feels like I'm surrounded, yet I don't know how many there are....’

Hooooong!

At that moment, an enormous club parted the air from behind Hyrkan, and an incredibly scary sound was heard.

Hyrkan dived to the side in fright.

Kwahng!

A large club landed where Hyrkan had been standing.

The 7 meter tall Ogre Golem had swung its club. It was an attack aimed at the Smogrian in front of Hyrkan, but Hyrkan had been in the way.

Hyrkan yelled out as he was barely able to dodge it.

“You son of a bitch! You cost me a lot, yet you dare to attack me!”

Of course, the Golem couldn't understand Hyrkan's words. The Golem ignored Hyrkan's words. It seemed it had adopted the AI of the barbaric ogre. The Golem attacked recklessly, and it indiscriminately swung its club towards the Smogrians.

Kwahng, kwahng!

The Ogre Golem was well worth the money. Every time the Ogre Golem swung its club it destroyed a Smogrian with a single strike. They weren't just destroyed. They were blown to pieces.

The Ogre Golem probably caught more Smogrians than Hyrkan.

[Your level has increased]

The Golem caused Hyrkan to level up, so he decided to look more kindly at the Ogre Golem's mistake.

Hyrkan had recovered all his of his Magic Power and Stamina.

‘I'll overlook this since I leveled up.’

Hyrkan immediately activated the Bone Armor Skill, and the Madness Helm. It felt as if the strengthened Skeleton Warriors didn't want to lose to the Ogre Golem. The Skeleton Warriors once again attacked in a berserk state.

Hyrkan also readied himself to move.

‘Huh?’

However, Hyrkan's eyes picked up Smogrians he hadn't seen before. It meant the Smogrians had tightened the perimeter around Hyrkan and his minions. At a glance, he could see over twenty of them.

‘Huh huh.’

Hyrkan let out a false laugh when he saw their excessive number.

‘The Battlefield felt like child's play compared to this.’

It had been 15 days since he had entered the Blue Mist Forest.

During that time, Hyrkan had raised 6 levels, and he had reached level 107. The level up pace was extremely fast, and it was thanks to the incredibly numerous population of Smogrians.

Truthfully, it was a blessing to be able to catch so many monsters. Currently, the Warlord was devoid of monsters to catch for the beginner users. It was so bad that users watched videos of other users hunting or they watched the televised shows to pass the time.

Still, even the great Hyrkan had to pull out from the battle at a certain point. If one thought about Hyrkan's skill, this was inconceivable.

The thing that frustrated Hyrkan the most was the fact that he wasn't able to search the forest the way he wanted. There were too many monsters to do that.

The thick blue fog made it impossible to see the terrain. Even if one wanted to follow the map, there were too many Smogrians swarming him. He couldn't move to where he wanted. It was like navigating a maze with one's eyes closed.

Of course, it wasn't as if he was devoid of any option.

After re-gripping his sword, Hykran looked forward.

‘Shall I just blast through?’

He decided to charge without looking back!

If he didn't worry about retreating, he could force his way through to a direction he wanted to travel.

Of course, his escape route would be cut off. If he was unlucky, it would be Game Over. He had kept this plan as a last resort.

However, he couldn't hunt indefinitely here.

‘If an answer doesn't come out before I reach level 110.....’

Hyrkan made a resolution.

Chapter 93. Elf's Keepsake (3)

Sweepers Guild.

They were one of the 30 great guilds, but they provided a markedly different content from the other guilds. They possessed killer contents.

The guild used the strong Magicians within the guild to completely wipe out the monsters in a selected region. The guild swepted the monsters, and this was the killer content offered by the Sweepers guild.

Of course, they didn't clear out the monsters for pure reasons.

Eventually new monsters would appear. However, there were a lot of merits in eliminating all the monster in a set amount of time. This was mainly done when a Block Field appeared. The investigation of the Block Field was more important than the monster hunt. If one was lucky, one could gain hints to the Main Scenario Quest. Moreover, one could earn titles.

The guild also went into hunting grounds where the population of monsters had grown too much. They eliminated the monster, and at times, they effectively controlled the population of monsters for the users.

They were decisive. The guild brought several hundred to a thousand high level Magicians to a hunt. With the help of various potions, they poured out their strongest magic at the same time. It

was quite a sight, and this could be only seen within Warlord. It could be compared to fireworks.

In truth, it was hard to gain anything through such a hunting method. It wasn't easy to level up, and the efficiency of the hunt decreased. Once they killed all the monsters, they had to wait for the regeneration of the next batch of monsters. Moreover, it wasn't only the Magicians, who went to these events. Numerous Priests and Swordsman users followed to assist the Magicians.

Even with all of these disadvantages, the Sweepers guild promoted this concept. The reason was the revenue from broadcasting these events. They were one of the top 5 in terms of bringing in profit with their footage in the 30 great guilds. Their contents were that mesmerizing.

Of course, the Sweepers Guild puts out an announcement before they commenced their monster cleaning.

[The Blue Mist Forest was found north-east of the Eagle mountain, and we are planning on sweeping it. We will give a fixed compensation to the users, who are in the midst of a hunt. Thank you for always cheering and helping the Sweepers guild.]

When the announcement came out, it would have been wise to escape this stage. If one died by getting swept up in the magical bombardment, one wouldn't even be able to collect one's insurance.

However, not everyone could choose the wise course of action.

‘Shit.’

Hyrkan’s expression crumpled when he saw the announcement.

‘I thought I would suck on some honey, since not many users were coming towards this place. I never expect it to turn sour like this.’

While Hyrkan was hunting inside the Blue Mist Forest, a decent amount of users had come to the Blue Mist Forest.

However, amongst all of them, there weren’t anyone, who used the Blue Mist Forest as their main hunting ground. The difficulty of the hunting ground was too high. The online community had already judged the Blue Mist Forest to be an inefficient hunting ground.

This wasn’t welcoming news to the users.

It was the opposite for the Sweepers Guild. This was a boon.

Now that the Block Field was released, secrets were surely there. Since regular users stayed away from coming here, the Sweepers Guild would get very low amount of complaints as they started their cleaning. The biggest obstacle in proceeding with a monster

cleaning by the Sweepers was the existing users.

Of course, the sweep wasn't going to be easy. The Sweepers Guild was one of the 30 great guilds, yet the Blue Mist Forest was infested with level 110+ monsters. It would be impossible to clear out the place in one go.

There was one thing that was definite. Now that the Sweepers guild was on the move the countdown had started for Hyrkan.

It was time to turn his resolution into action.

'I must have lost my mind.'

Hyrkan questioned himself as he ran through the fog.

Kooh-uhhhh!

A Smogrian suddenly appeared in front of Hyrkan. Its arms were like sharp blades, and they were swung towards Hyrkan.

However, Hyrkan wasn't surprised by its appearance.

Hweeek!

Instead, he easily dodge its arms, and he ran past as he stabbed the Smogrian on its side.

Pah-kahk!

While he was doing so, Hyrkan quickly swung his sword to separate its upper and lower body.

A crumbling sound was heard instead of a slicing sound as the Smogrian was sliced in half.

Kooh-uh, kooh-uh!

It was cut in half, but its arms and legs were still moving. It immediately opened its mouth, and it let out a horrible shriek towards Hyrkan.

He looked at the scene from the corner of his eyes, and Hyrkan clicked his tongue.

‘I must have lost my mind.’

Hyrkan once again questioned himself.

His gaze had moved past the Smogrian he had cut in half, and it headed towards the far back.

The thick fog was limiting his vision, so he couldn’t confirm it with his sight. However, the shimmer of numerous Smogrians flickered in front of Hyrkan’s eyes.

‘I must have lost my mind.’

This was the third time he questioned himself.

He made a resolution to cut through the Blue Mist Forest, so he had immediately turned his resolution into action. At first, it wasn't that hard. Smogrians weren't slow, but they weren't fast enough to catch Hyrkan. He had incredible Strength Stat, and he had the Leg Strength Modification(C). His ability to run was amazing.

Moreover, he could easily deal with those, who blocked his path. He just had to destroy anything that appeared in front of his eyes.

However, there was a limit to any course of action!

Hyrkan had repeatedly ran away, and now he had a significant tail behind his back. If one's tail become sufficiently long enough, it will catch up to you. The number of Smogrians following after him had turned into the Rubicon river. He couldn't turn back now.

‘I expected it, but.....’

Of course, he had expected something like this.

However, the number of Smogrians converging on him as he headed towards the center was mind boggling. It was much more

than he expected.

‘How can there be so many of them?’

It was so bad that it felt as if he was being swarmed by bugs.

He would have understood if there were a lot of user making the Blue Mist Forest as their preferred hunting ground. This would increase the number of monster being regenerated. However, that wasn't the case at all right now. No, even if he took those factors into consideration, there were too many monsters here.

It meant there was something special going on with the current situation.

Was it a bug?

‘What's the cause?’

There must be a special reason why the population of monsters here had increased in an explosive manner.

From Hyrkan's perspective, he wished for the latter. If it was a bug, this would be endless, and he would eventually get a Game Over.

However, the change Hyrkan had been hoping for arrived after he had been running for 20 minutes.

‘Huh?’

After a certain point, Hyrkan knew something had changed.

‘They aren’t following me?’

They had chased after him as if Hyrkan had killed their parents. However, the presence of Smogrians disappeared after a certain point in time.

Smogrians had shown up everytime he took a step, but they were all gone now.

Hyrkan turned to look behind him. When Hyrkan stopped, he knew the monsters should have caught up to him, but there were none of them.

‘Maybe?’

Hweek!

Hyrkan had his suspicions, so he threw a Skeleton Fragment into the distance.

After traveling a long distance, the Skeleton Fragment turned into a Skeleton Warrior.

After taking form as a Skeleton Warrior, it slowly walked towards Hyrkan, since there was no battle present. It just idled as it stared at Hyrkan.

Hyrkan flicked his finger twice. the Skeleton Warrior did nothing, but it got into its fighting stance.

‘Would you look at this?’

It meant there weren’t any monsters nearby. Hyrkan tilted his head in puzzlement.

‘What? Then why would it suddenly.....’

Of course, suspicion bloomed within him.

‘Ah!’

Hyrkan’s suspicion was answered when he turned his head.

Hyrkan caught sight of a black object.

Hyrkan had finally arrived at the location he wanted. Hyrkan smiled.

‘Yes. This is it.’

After regulating his breathing, he immediately checked his consumable items and his own status. He had brought a large amount of supply, so he still had a lot of consumable items left.

Moreover, the consumable items he had right now were the ones he received from Pelato. These were basically free item, so it tasted really good. It felt as if the the items were more effective than it really was.

He didn't know what would happen, so he put a Resistance Effect Candy in his mouth as a precaution. Afterwards, he shouted out in an overbearing manner.

“Let's quickly end this! Come at me!”

The response to Hyrkan's shout was immediate.

[You've acquired the Title, 'Person who Encounter the Corrupted Comrade'.]

Hyrkan's expression slightly changed.

‘Uh?’

It was an announcement for acquiring a Title.

This was good news. He never expected to suddenly gain a title here.

However, Hyrkan felt an instinctive threat at the word Corrupted Comrade.

‘Corrupted Comrade?’

He had heard those words before.

‘M...maybe?’

The black object revealed itself in front of Hyrkan.

It was close to 2 meters tall. Its shape was clearly humanoid. It wore armor on its lower body, but its upper body was bare. His muscular body was sooty, and it looked as if it didn’t have any pupils. Its eyes were hollow.

However, its appearance didn’t catch Hyrkan’s eyes. It held a rusty and plain longsword in its right hand. Hyrkan caught sight of a gold ring on its finger.

Hyrkan twitched a finger. It was the finger with the Society’s Ring equipped on it.

“Fuck.”

Hyrkan let out a sigh, and he started cussing.

Corrupted Comrade.

It was a member of the Secret Society. It probably had chased after the Corrupted Power, and it must have gotten caught. After numerous torture sessions and experimentation, it had been turned into a monster.

Truthfully, he didn't mind such backstories. The important part was that a member of the Secret Society was his enemy, and the ability it possessed.

‘A bomb rolled in instead of a pumpkin.’

It had complete immunity against physical attacks. This was ability of the Corrupted Comrade.

Pooh-haht!

Hyrkan swung his golden sword called ‘The Sword made out of Golden Mantis’ Sickle’. It bit into Corrupted Comrade’s body.

The wound healed each moment as Hyrkan’s sword made a cut.

It was like cutting water with a sword. This wasn’t just about having great regeneration ability.

‘Shit.’

Hyrkan clicked his tongue, when his sword couldn’t make any wounds. He slid past the Corrupted Comrade, and he created some space. He had his back turned as he tried to widen his distance from the Corrupted Comrade.

Ooh-uhhhhhh!

When he turned his body, Hyrkan felt the presence of the Corrupted Comrade. It had already closed the distance. It swung its sword as it let out a frightening sound.

It was swung from top to bottom. It couldn’t even be called a sword swing. It brought down the sword without any form.

However, it was really fast.

Hyrkan was having a hard time dodging. He had to hold his sword horizontally to block the strike!

Kah-ahng!

The rough clang of steel rang out, and Hyrkan’s feet was pressed into the ground.

Hyrkan had a unique sword that was so well known for its attack

and durability that it was nicknamed as 'The Gangster'. If he had a lame level 100 Rare rank Sword, it would have been shattered into pieces by this blow.

This was how fast and strong the attack of the Corrupted Comrade was. Hyrkan was barely able to fight it.

'The Skeleton Warriors won't work.'

In other words, he couldn't use the Skeleton Warriors to buy time.

If it was the Skeleton Knight or the Golem, they would be able to buy him some time. However, buying time was the only thing they could do.

If he fought a monster to just buy time, he would just regret it at the end.

In the end, Hyrkan needed some other answer to this problem.

Choooong!

Hyrkan was face to face with the Corrupted Comrade. Hyrkan slid its sword away. This created enough time for him to back away.

Kwahjeeek!

The Corrupted Comrade's sword embedded itself on the ground Hyrkan had been standing on. During all of this, Hyrkan threw a Skeleton Fragment into the distance.

The Skeleton Fragment turned into a Skeleton Magician.

This was the answer. If it was invulnerable to physical attack, he had to get rid of it with magic!

Of course, this wasn't a full solution. However, this was a critical part in coming up with an answer.

Hyrkan took a deep breath.

At that moment, the effort and practice he had done in secret flashed through his mind.

When he returned to the past, Hyrkan had made a promise to himself. He'll do everything by himself, and he would reap the benefits all by himself!

However, Hykran had a lot of homework he needed to finish before he could achieve that goal.

One was finding out a way to defeat a monster, who couldn't be harmed through physical means.

There was only one solution. He had no choice, but to develop a magical attack.

His best option was to learn attack magic like a proper magician. However, unless he wanted to put all his effort into magic, his efforts would be useless.

Even if he bought Skill Books with money, his limitations would be evident unless he was able to rank the magic up to a High Rank Magic.

The only magical attack he could use was the Bone Explosives. Then there was the Skeleton Magicians.

The Bone Explosives were powerful, but expensive. There was also a limit to how many he could use. It was suitable as an aid for damage dealing, but it was impossible to use it as one's main attack.

So there was only one option left, and it was the Skeleton Magicians. Unexpectedly, the attack of the Skeleton Magicians were quite high. As the Skeleton Magician's rank increases, the power of the magic increased. If it received the buff from the Skeleton Knight and the Skeleton Science, the damage would increase further. If he could gain a Skill related to Skeleton Magicians, then their magic could become very powerful.

However, the problem was in how to use them.

Unlike the Skeleton warriors, he couldn't train the Skeleton Magicians to act as he wanted.

In the end, the Skeleton Magicians had to recognize his attack pattern first. Then they would be able to move in sync with Hyrkan.

This was what he had worked on in practice.

He learned how to dance with a monster, while the Skeleton Magician was watching! The fruition of his practice could be seen right now.

Puh-uhng!

The magic thrown by the Skeleton Magician stuck to the back of the Corrupted Comrade. It started to burn, and the body melted. However, the flame disappeared after a little while. Still, the efficacy of the attack was apparent. It had instant recovered after Hyrkan's sword strike, but this wound wasn't closing easily.

Koo-uhhhhh!

The Corrupted Comrade immediately glared at the Skeleton Magician.

Pook!

Hyrkan stabbed his sword into its body to get the attention of the Corrupted Comrade.

Pook!

Then he stabbed one more time.

It hadn't received any damage, but it focused its attention back towards Hyrkan once again. It swung its sword towards Hyrkan.

Shweeeek!

Hyrkan barely avoided the sword.

Hooohng!

However, Hyrkan couldn't avoid the second high to low strike.

Kah-ahng!

He blocked with his sword.

Hyrkan gritted his teeth.

'I'll move 5 steps to switch location.'

Hyrkan was barely able to untangle himself from the face to face deadlock, then he moved 5 steps. He didn't simply move backwards. He switched position. The Corrupted Comrade moved with Hyrkan.

The two of them stood there as they clashed swords once again

Puh-uhng!

The Skeleton Magician's magic hit a bull's eye on the Corrupted Comrade's back.

If Hyrkan hadn't moved, the Magic spell would have landed between Hyrkan and the Corrupted Comrade.

However, Hyrkan didn't have any time to rest. He was busy trying to draw the aggro of the Corrupted Comrade after they ended their standoff.

'If I die from being hit by my Skeleton Magician's magic, I would have to quit Warlord from the embarrassment I would feel.'

If other users had the chance to see what was going on.... If the audience was the skilled users of Warlord, they would have been shocked instead of being impressed.

Hyrkan looked like a shooting game expert, where one was dodging missiles flying in from all directions. He was on the level of an expert, who could turn the tables by guiding missiles towards

the enemy.

He had to repeat this action continuously, and the timing was difficult that it made one feel faint.

This couldn't be achieved only by practising.

Hyrkan wasn't good at anything in real life. Even though, he was an insignificant being, he was very talented at Warlord. His potential couldn't be compare to anyone.

‘All right. I got the feel of it.’

At that point, Hyrkan summoned an additional Skeleton Magician.

‘Let's double the pace.’

This was the moment when one of the most popular video of Hyrkan was born. The video was called ‘The Waltz’.

Chapter 94. Waltz (1)

Ddahk ddahk ddahk!

Every time the chin of the Skeleton Magician moved, it clacked. It was as if a crazy magician was laughing.

Accompanying the bizarre laughter, the Skeleton Magician threw a big fireball. It flew quickly through the air in an arc. At the end of the arc, the body of the Corrupted Comrade was present. The size of its body had decreased significantly.

Puh-uhng!

When the fireball reached the target, it exploded. Accompanying the explosion, the flame blew apart into sparks of flame, and they stuck to the Corrupted Comrade's body.

Hwah-roo-roo....

Up until now, the flames had quickly extinguished itself. However, the flames continued to burn, and it let its presence be known.

Hyrkan was watching all of this from a nearby location. He gripped his sword as he stood 2 meters away. Hyrkan lowered the point of his sword towards the ground instead of pointing it towards the Corrupted Comrade.

Battle Complete.

However, Hyrkan didn't let go of his feeling of tension.

He still hadn't heard the announcement. There weren't any announcement indicating that his Quest had been completed, and he hadn't received any Titles. This meant the battle was over, but the instance wasn't at an end.

Hyrkan looked at the Corrupted Comrade, and he stood vigilant of his surrounding.

More time passed, and nothing special was happening.

“Whew!”

Hyrkan was finally able to let out a short sigh. When he let out the sigh, his mind had some available space to think.

The available space was occupied by idle thoughts.

‘Tsk.’

Hyrkan's idle thoughts were filled with self-reflection.

‘I got hit twice.’

He took out a candy from a secret pocket located near his chest, and he put the candy into his mouth. There were various spots on his clothes that was blackened. This was the trace left behind after he was hit by the Skeleton Magician's magic.

He hadn't been hit by the full brunt of the magic spell. When the fireball exploded after hitting the Corrupted Comrade, the sparks of flame had hit him. This was what had left behind the marks on his clothes.

It was hard to see this as a big problem. The clothes worn by Hyrkan was a Defensive Set made from of the Clear Spider's webs. It wasn't an item that could be destroyed by such minor damage. To be truthful, he hadn't taken much damage. Moreover, it had been necessary for him to stick to the Corrupted Comrade, so the amount of damage he suffered was inevitable.

It wasn't something that should make him take time for self-reflection.

‘I'll have to practice a little bit more.’

However, Hyrkan was still not satisfied with this battle, so corner of his mouth drooped.

Hyrkan chewed on the candy as he had an introspection. The flame that had been burning the Corrupted Comrade's body started to subside. When the flames died down, its muscular body was gone. Hyrkan saw a skinny body that was akin to a skeleton.

“Thank you.,”

It was burnt black, and an unpleasant voice emanated from the skeletal body.

Hyrkan realized what was happening, so he moved closer to the Corrupted Comrade.

When Hyrkan approached the Corrupted Comrade, it spoke while standing upright.

“Thank you from freeing me from this pain.”

Hyrkan took off his glove. He spoke as he displayed his golden ring, the Proof of the Secret Society.

“Ah, you are.....”

Its eyes were already burnt black, so it was impossible to see Hyrkan through its naked eye. However, the Corrupted Comrade had no problem identifying Hyrkan. As with the other NPCs, it could sense the distinctive energy emitted by the Secret Society’s ring.

“Please take my keepsakes to Maeung. Then.... Tell Maeung that he was right. Please deliver those words for me.”

After he spoke those words, the Corrupted Comrade dropped to

his knees. This was the first time the Corrupted Comrade had fallen to his knees.

Pshhhhhhhh!

Then he started to disintegrate into ashes.

[Quest 'Elf's Keepsake' has been completed.]

[The Quest 'Will of a Comrade' has started.]

The Quest Announcement immediately popped up.

'Great.'

He could wrap this up.

Hyrkan released the built up tension.

[You've earned the title 'Destroyer of Corruption.]

However, Hyrkan became tense once again.

‘Uh?’

Something unexpected had happened.

The thick blue fog made it hard to see even an object right in front of their noses. Five users walked together through the blue fog.

It seemed this group had gone through several battles already. Their clothes were a bit rumpled.

On the other hand, that was a huge accomplishment. This place wasn't an easy place to fight. They had fought several battles within the Blue Mist Forest, yet only their clothes were rumpled. This meant they hadn't taken much damage. It was evidence that their skills and levels were extraordinary.

The five of them came across a boulder that could be used as a chair within the thick fog. For a brief moment, they slightly relaxed as they started a conversation.

“It really is hard to hunt here.”

“How can there be so many monsters here? No matter how I think about it, this is an abnormal amount of monsters.”

“Even though there used to be a Block Field here, there is a good reason why the Users aren't flocking to this place. This place is the worst as a hunting ground.”

“Doesn’t that make it more appealing as a place to conduct the Sweep?”

Sweep.

If one overheard this word, anyone could discern their identities.

Sweepers!

The five of them were part of the Sweepers guild. They were an advance party sent to investigate the location they were going to do a full-scale cleaning.

Their average level was 130. They all possessed high level, and they were masters at survival.

Moreover, they were outstanding at evaluating monsters.

“Will it be possible for us to Sweep this place? The level of the monsters seem quite high?”

“But isn’t their Health and Defense weak? I’ll be an easy Sweep. The problem is whether we will be able to take footage in this place.”

“I guess the fog is a bit much here.”

“How about clearing the fog with the Wind type magic? We can push away all the fog then we can commence our magical bombardment. Wouldn’t that make a great vid?”

“Bring a magician here to check if it’ll work.”

“Anyways, it’ll be hard for a small party to hunt here. At least, we confirmed that. There is no way anyone is hunting here.”

They were holding a conversation to get rid of their nervousness when it happened.

“Prepare for battle!”

One of the user hadn’t been participating in the conversation. The user, who had been keeping watch, suddenly let out a yell.

The party members immediately got into their battle stance when they heard the shout. The Tankers stepped forward, and the Priest got his Heal magic ready. Moreover, they were cautious. They didn’t try for pre-emptive attack. No matter what happened, they were confident that they’ll be able to cope with the situation. They were veterans affiliated with one of the 30 great guilds.

‘Huh?’

‘Uh?’

The being that was approaching them was most definitely a user.

They could see a rough outline of the figure, but it was completely different from the shape of a Smogrian. If one considered the sight one could actually make out, there were plenty evidence that suggested that the person in front of them wasn't a Smogrian. The Smogrians had a similar coloring to the blue fog, so one couldn't see it unless it was really close to a user.

The deciding factor was how fast this being was approaching them. When this user discovered the Sweepers guild members, he stopped. Only a user would stop when one sees another user.

‘Who the hell hunts in this place?’

Moreover, the user was alone.

‘Crazy!’

‘He’s hunting by himself here?’

The five users had a dazed expression on their face.

Eventually, the distance between them narrowed. The two sides were close enough to be able to see each other’s faces.

“Hahoe Mask?”

Someone spoke.

A reply came immediately.

“Which guild are you affiliated with?”

It was a pretty unfriendly answer. It was a non-answer, and that point couldn't be argued.

He didn't even confirm his identity, yet he asked for their affiliation. They couldn't consider his words to be a proper answer.

However, the Sweepers guild members answered without making any fuss.

“We are affiliated with the Sweepers guild.”

At that moment, Hahoe Mask finally came fully into view. Hyrkan asked the five users a question.

“Did the Monster Sweep already start? When I saw the announcement, it said the Sweep would be starting five days from today.”

“We are the advance party.”

After a brief conversation, the two sides looked at each other.

Hyrkan's appearance was bizarre in the eyes of the Sweepers guild members. The most striking part of his appearance was the big bag he was carrying. It was a large duffel bag that a soldier might use. The bag looked as if it was about to burst.

It was evident that the bag was filled with Ingredient Coins. As members of the Sweepers guild, they were well aware of this fact.

This was why their surprise was much larger.

‘My god. He really was hunting here?’

‘By himself?’

The number of Ingredient Coin was basically the number of monsters Hyrkan had taken down.

They were beyond being impressed. The Sweeper Guild members were shocked.

‘Incredible.’

‘Recently, I heard the 30 great guilds were competing with each other to recruit him. I now understand why.’

The five of them were still trying to process their surprise when it happened.

“Then I’ll.....”

Hyrkan was about to leave, but he stopped as if he just remembered something.

‘Ah.’

Soooohk!

Hyrkan extended his hand towards them. He wasn’t asking for a handshake. He had his palm up as he extended his hand. If he wanted a handshake, he would have extended his hand straight.

The Sweepers guild members were confused as they looked at his palm.

What was the meaning of this?

Then doubt started to creep into their expression. Hyrkan gave a curt explanation.

“I’m retreating since I saw the Sweeper guild’s Announcement to clean this place. Don’t I qualify for the compensation?”

The Sweeper guild members put on awkward smiles at his words.

‘My god.’

‘If he sold the the Ingredient Coins he has right now, won’t he be able to gain several thousand gold in return?’

He was probably making a lot of money from the views he got on his videos. It was an amount of money that a regular person couldn’t even dream about making. This was the first time the Sweepers guild members met Hyrkan, so they were also having a hard time imagining it.

“Are you perhaps saying one of the 30 great guilds is going back on their word?”

Hyrkan spoke again, and his words were strict, earnest, and serious.

“I’m in a hurry, so it would be great if you can settle the account right now.”

If he didn’t immediately receive the compensation, it felt as if he was ready to make this situation bloody! That was the vibe he was giving off.

In the end, Hyrkan left after receiving 100 gold.

Ahn-jaehyun wordlessly stared at his Tablet PC. He was staring at a particular Item's Option.

He stared fixedly at the Tablet PC, and it seemed Ahn-jaehyun's vision became blurry. He turned his eyes away from the Tablet PC. He closed both his eyes, and he cover his face with both his hands. His eyes throbbed.

It was easy to read the Item's Option. If one knew Korean, even a child could read it. Ahn-jaehyun was overly knowledgeable regarding the game of Warlord, so he could understand the content just by glancing at the Stats.

This was the reason why he reacted this way.

‘Wow.’

Ahn-jaehyun knew the value of these Items better than anyone. He couldn't help, but be surprised.

‘I never expected to get my hands on these items through such a method.’

These were the Items that made Ahn-jaehyun so surprised.

[Corruption Destroyer's Necklace]

Main Properties

- Unique-rank Item
 - Increases class-specific stats proportional to level
 - All stats +33
 - Class related Stats +33
 - Chosen Stats +33
 - Required Level : 100
 - Required Condition: Title 'Corruption Destroyer'
-

Sub-properties

- When one wears items related to the Pursuer of Corruption, Destroyer and Arbiter, chosen Stats + 99
 - When equipped, damage received is decreased by 10%.
 - This item reverts to its owner.
-

Miscellaneous

– It is a necklace for Corruption Destroyers, who resist against the power of Corruption. It holds a strong power.

[Member of Society, Ivan's Sword]

Main Properties

- Unique-rank Item
 - Strength +77
 - Stamina +66
 - Intelligence +55
 - Magic Power +44
 - Required Level : level 120
 - Required Condition : At least, 1000 points Strength
-

Sub-properties

- When equipped, 15% of monster's defense is ignored
 - When equipped, it is possible to use the Skill, 'Haste (C)'.
(Cool time 15 sec)
 - This Item cannot be destroyed.
 - This item reverts to its owner.
-

Miscellaneous

- This is Ivan's Sword. He was a member of the Secret Society. As expected of a sword made by the Blacksmith Olf, it contains a strong power.

These were the two items left behind by the Corrupted Comrade. It was the Keepsakes left behind by Ivan.

He had to take the 3 Keepsakes to Maeung, which included the Secret Society's Ring. As the reward for the Quest, Maeung had given him this two items.

When he received the Items, Ahn-jaehyun was in a state of disbelief. He threw away the Pursuer of Corruption Necklace, and he equipped the Corruption Destroyer's Necklace. He stored the Ivan's Sword in his storage, since he couldn't equip it yet. Then he exited the game, and he had been staring at the two Item's Options until now!

'I never expected such a jackpot to show up.'

Ahn-jaehyun had a hard time believing in his current situation.

He had gained incredible Items that was well beyond his expectations.

Ahn-jaehyun removed his hands from his face. He opened his closed eyes. It was hard to believe, but reality was reality.

'There is no reason to be flustered. There is no need to be worried.'

Ahn-jaehyun simplified his current situation.

He had been lucky, so he had gotten a Spec Up. Now he just had to use the Spec Up to his advantage to play the game.

No, he had to ride this momentum.

‘Yes, I have to keep this momentum going.’

Ahn-jaehyun had his savings and the money he received from his sponsors. He thought about his financial situation.

He worked hard to save his money, so he had a good amount of money saved.

‘I have to burn it all.’

He hadn’t used his money , since an unexpected situation could crop up in the future. Still, he hadn’t been planning on spending the large sum of money.

‘This is the time to let it all hang out.’

However, he had to build upon his momentum, so he would have to make a direct investment. It was time to spend his money even if his spending money for food decreased.

‘I have to seriously invest in the defensive gear of my Skeletons.’

If he upgraded his Specs a little bit more, he would be able to hunt in level 140 hunting grounds at level 110.

Currently, the level 140 hunting ground could be considered the front lines right now. The number one ranking player, Perfect One, was at level 164. The top 100 Ranking started from level 152.

If he was going to hunt in the frontlines, he had to equip himself with the latest items. As always, the latest gears were the top-selling items.

Ahn-jaehyun made a fist.

‘Yes. I have to charge for my footages from now on. Then I’ll be able to bring in the real jackpot when I sell my footages.’

He had to get a little bit more serious about bringing in more profit.

‘Wait, what should I do with the footage?’

Ahn-jaehyun thought about the footage of him battling the Corrupted Comrade. When he gained the Corruption Destroyer Title, he hadn’t been able to think of anything else. This was why he hadn’t given any thoughts to his footage.

‘At best, I don’t think I’ll be able to hit a million view with this...’

Truthfully, the footage wasn’t that appealing in the eyes of Ahn-jaehyun.

Hahoe Mask fans liked Hahoe Mask fighting a full-fledged battle with a monster. However, in this footage, he hadn’t even attacked. He avoided, baited and danced.

‘I guess I’ll leave it to the Romani Films.’

Ahn-jaehyun thought about the Romani film company. If Ahn-jaehyun did a poor job editing the footage, he was sure his reputation would take a hit. This was why he needed help from a professional.

Ahn-jaehyun prepared his video file, then he contacted the Romain film company.

The conversation was brief. It was as if they been waiting for Ahn-jaehyun to contact them. They happily accepted the job. When he sent the video file to the Romani film company, Ahn-jaehyun had a small wish.

‘I hope there will be enough views to offset the cost.’

When the file was sent, any thoughts about the footage containing his fight with the Corrupted Comrade left his mind.

‘What should I spend my money on? Shall I buy a staff that can be used by the Skeleton Magicians?’

From that point on, his mind was filled with thought about equipping his Skeletons.

Chapter 95. Waltz (2)

4.

A single Skeleton Knight was in a heated battle with a Black Hound.

The battle wasn't tight at all. It was obvious that the Black Hound held the upper hand. As the battle continued, deep wounds started to appear on the Skeleton Knight's body.

Kuh-huhng, kuh-hung!

The Black Hound let out rough barks as it either scratched the Skeleton Knight with its claws or it bit the Skeleton Knight with its teeth. Every time it attacked a significant wound was formed. If the Skeleton Knight hadn't been wearing armor and the Bone Armor wasn't layered on top of it, the Skeleton Knight would have become a chew toy for the Black Hound.

Shweeek!

Moreover, the sword swung by the Skeleton Knight was able to wound the Black Hound, but the wound wasn't deep. The Black Hound was known for its large body and tough hide. The wound was only a little bit deeper than a scratch.

At this point, it was obvious that the Skeleton Knight was inferior to the Black Hound.

Was this the cause?

‘Uh-whew.’

Hyrkan let out a sigh. He hadn’t participated in the battle. He just observed the battle from the back.

Truthfully, this particular battle shouldn’t have made him sigh. It was a given that the Skeleton Knight’s battle ability wasn’t on the level of a Black Hound. However, this was something very obvious that he had known even before the battle.

Hyrkan’s level was 114, so there was no way his summoned Skeleton Knight would possess a higher level than him.

On the other hand, the Black Hound was a level 130 monster. Moreover, it was one of the strongest mid-sized monster in the level 130 range.

It would have been more strange if the Skeleton Knight was able to fight on par with the Black Hound. However, Hyrkan hadn’t let out a sigh, because of the Skeleton Knight’s battle capability

‘The money I spent on just one Skeleton..... It was more expensive than my down payment on my one room.’

It was all about money.

‘I emptied everything, yet I was only able to equip one of them.’

Currently, the Skeleton Knight was equipped with level 100 Unique Items. His Armament Skill was Rank C, so he could equip four parts including the weapon. Hyrkan decided to equip the Skeleton Knight with Unique Items.

Of course, it wasn't as expensive or good as the Golden Mantis Scythe Sword or the Clear Spider defensive set. However, he hadn't skimped on his spendings.

As Hyrkan had said before, the Skeleton Knight was wearing a collection of Items that was more expensive than the down payment on his one room.

This was the part that made Hyrkan let out a sigh.

‘I'm out of ramen, and the coffee's all gone....’

Hyrkan reflexively opened the Hologram window to access his Youtube page.

He wanted to check how much donation he had received. Of course, he didn't have to view his account to see that he had no donations. Still, he decided to check the status of his donations. It was basically scraping the bottom of an empty rice bowl with a spoon...

His appearance was pitiable, and very miserable.

Hyrkan couldn't hold back the bitter laugh as he considered his own status.

'I've finally gone crazy. It isn't as if I'll suddenly gain money if I stare at it...'

He finally caught sight of his donations.

"Uh?"

Hyrkan was having a hard time believing what he was seeing.

5.

It was Dmitri Shostakovich's Waltz No. 2 or the Second Waltz.

It was a very beautiful song.

It was a lyrical music, where at times it was lively. From start to end, the music never lost its grace. The music had a strong magic of making people want to start moving their body to the music.

With this beautiful song as background, two people were dancing.

They weren't lovers.

On one side, there was an enormous muscular monster. On the other side, there was a human wearing a Hahoe Mask.

Also, each dancers held hideous swords that was unbecfitting this dance.

They were an ill-matched pair for this dance.

However, their movements were in sync with the music. It was uncanny.

Kah-ahng, kahng!

The sound of their swords clashing rang out. Accompanying the sound, they lead each other around a restricted stage.

Puh-uhng!

The crescendos were the sound of magic exploding. The sounds of the explosion was interspersed within the song, and the sound was much more powerful than the sound of drums accenting the strong points of the music.

The highlight was last half of the video.

In the former part, various instruments were used in concert. However, when the battle reached the latter half, a saxophone solo started. The saxophone's unique mournful sound continued to the end, and it created a serene scene when the battle ended.

The footage ended after 3 minute 40 seconds.

“How wonderful was that?”

Red Bull's guild master Chev was watching the video with others. He asked the question to his aide Yel.

“Well, he is good.”

She hated that Chev held the Hahoe Mask in such high esteem. However, she couldn't help, but acknowledge the footage.

It was that great.

Chev replayed the video, and he spoke in a tone of admiration.

“I heard when one becomes a master at something, it become an art form. It seems the Hahoe Mask has reached that level.”

Chev's continued to give high praise. Yel pouted when she heard Chev's repeated high praise.

Around the same time....

“A talented person is talented.”

The first string raid members of the Stormhunters guild was also watching the Hahoe Mask's new video. They admired the Waltz.

Hatch was the first one to articulate his feelings.

“Where the hell did this guy appear from?”

“Hooong. If I meet someone, who dances this way, I'll be able to destroy him in an instant! I'll win in a fight against him!”

Hahui answered in an ill-tempered manner when she heard Hatch give his compliments. Hatch smirked as he looked at her.

‘She must have been quite surprised by this.’

Hatch had bickered with Hahui the most, so he knew what her personality was like. The fact that Hahui was speaking like this meant she was feeling a sense of inferiority.

“All right. Now you are just bragging.”

“Hoong.”

At that moment, Hatch and the rest of the members naturally looked at their leader Shir.

‘How is she going to respond to this?’

‘Our boss really has an eye for talent.’

Shir’s interest towards the Hahoe Mask was great. If one was a member of the Stormhunter guild, this was a well known fact. Basically, this video had put a fire to her desire to have this talent. It was more apt to say a bomb had gone off.

However, Shir didn’t respond immediately. She didn’t say anything as she thought in silence.

The guild members of the Stormhunter also waited in silence.

She finally opened her mouth.

“Hatch.”

“Yes, boss.”

“How many guilds within the 30 great guilds do we have an amicable relationship with?”

“There are twelve.”

“Send this to all twelve of them.”

What should he send?

Hatch looked back with a questioning look on his face. Shir answered with a resolute expression on her face.

“The Stormhunters are calling dibs on the Hahoe Mask. Tell them to keep their hands off of him.

6.

Kuh-huhng, kuh-huhng!

Hyrkan was running on full tilt as he tried to run away from the Black Hound that was chasing him.

This was the one that had been fighting a 1on1 battle with his Skeleton Knight, not too long ago. It still possessed numerous wounds it received from the Skeleton Knight's sword. After crushing the skull of the Skeleton Knight, the Black Hound has immediately chased after Hyrkan.

‘This is crazy.’

In truth, Hyrkan could kill this monster with the skills he

currently possessed.

However, Hyrkan was running away as if he had been bewitched by something.

‘What the hell happened?’

The numbers had bewitched Hyrkan.

Seven hundred seventy thousand views.

This was the current view count on the battle footage with the Corrupted Comrade called the Waltz. It hadn't even been a day since the video had been uploaded, yet he was at the cusp of 1 million views. The views was rising sharply.

That wasn't the end of the news. His Waltz video was being put up on the main page of every website related to Warlord. It was causing quite the sensation. It was being called the best battle video in the history of Warlord! It was being said he had elevated his battle to an art form! There was enough extreme praise to make him feel embarrassed since he was the target of those praises, and the donations were coming in at an explosive rate.

This was why his thoughts was all jumbled up inside his head.

Kuh-huhng, kuh-huhng!

The Black Hound let out a rough bark towards Hyrkan. Hyrkan yelled out in annoyance.

“Shut the hell up!”

Of course, the shout couldn't be understood by the Black Hound. Hyrkan was so messed up in the head right now that he spoke those words out loud.

Moreover, Hyrkan knew what it meant to reach the milestone of 1 million views in a day.

‘Will I get to 100 million?’

If he could get 1 million views in a single day, then he had the chance to reach hundred million views!

This wasn't a certainty, but it was a general rule of thumb.

Moreover, if he reached that 100 million views, his own valuation would change. His income from just the ads would be incredible, and the brand of his nickname would rise in worth. At the very least, Hyrkan would earn enough money where he wouldn't have to worry about the cost of buying ramen.

Hyrkan tried to catch his breath.

‘I never expected a big hit from this.’

Basically, this was a big hit!

This was the jackpot one dreamed about for those who wanted to earn one's keep through playing Warlord.

Hyrkan was finally able to think clearly once again. His head had been filled with numbers, but the thoughts inside his head was organized now.

Hyrkan put his hand into his pocket. Then he took out a handful of Skeleton Fragments, and he scattered them.

At the same time, Hyrkan came to a stop. When Hyrkan stopped, the Black Hound was already right in front of his nose.

Kuh-huhng!

The Black Hound opened its mouth wide as if it wanted to crush Hyrkan's head with a single bite. Hyrkan used the sword in his hand as a shield to block its insolent attack.

The Black Hound chewed on Hyrkan's sword as if it was a bone, and it didn't stop in its charge. Hyrkan's body was being pushed backwards.

During all of this, the Skeleton Warriors appeared, and it charged toward the Black Hound to help their owner. When the Skeleton

Warriors reached the Black Hound, they stabbed their swords into its large body. The Black Hound turned its attention towards the Skeleton Warriors, who had stung him like a swarm of bees.

When he became free from the Black Hound, Hyrkan waved his sword around to shake off the Black Hound's slobber from his sword.

Eventually, he re-gripped his sword, and there was a smile on his lips.

“.....oh yes!”

Hyrkan's shoulder started to shake from his exclamation, which was infused with happiness.

7.

“That's the end!”

“Wow! We caught it! The Raid was a success!”

A large bear, which boasted a body of 30 meter in length, fell down. At that moment, over thirty users in the surrounding simultaneously raised their hands into the air. They started to celebrate their victory.

It was a level 160 Boss Monster. One of the 30 great guilds, Triple Wings, had taken down the Eagle Bear.

The leader of the raid party was named Skool. He was also an executive of the Triple Wings guild. Skool started to look for a particular user. Everyone was celebrating and sharing their happiness with others, but a single user was off to the side by himself.

“Thank you for helping us.”

The user shook his head at Skool’s words.

“No. I just did what I was paid to do. I didn’t do much.”

“No way, Michael. We were able to overcome this great tribulation, because of you. This was also true with the previous war with the Big Smiles... We keep becoming indebted to you..”

The user named Michael nodded his head, and he refused to respond to Skool’s words.

Skool spoke carefully to him..

“If you come to our guild, we would treat you in a first class....”

An executive of a 30 great guild was directly recruiting this user. This was unheard of.

However, Michael put on a small smile as he shook his head when he heard those words.

Skool swallowed what he was about to say.

“Since you are our benefactor, I won’t bother you anymore. Still, if you need any help from us, please contact us.”

“Thank you.”

At that moment, Michael raised his hand.

“I’m sorry. I have to receive an urgent call...”

Michael turned to walk away after he spoke those words. After moving to an appropriate distance, he answered the call.

There wasn’t much substance to the call.

“I just finished my raid. What do you need?”

– One more person has been added to the List.

When he heard the word List, Michael’s face hardened into an ugly expression.

“Who?”

– Hahoe Mask. From now on, we kill him on sight. It’s an order.

The call ended there.

Chapter 96. Waltz (3)

8.

– Awesomeeeeeee!

– I’ve never seen such a thing even in a movie!

– This is good enough to be made into a movie!

– If you have a conscience, you should donate a dollar if you saw the footage.

– The bastard above me is unscrupulous. He donated only 1 dollar? I donated 2 dollars.

– The bastard above me is unscrupulous. He donated only 2 dollar? I donated 3 dollars.

– The bastard above me is unscrupulous. He donated only 3 dollar? I.....

It had been 1 week since the Waltz video was uploaded.

There were already over 1 million comments underneath the Waltz video. However, the more striking figure was the views.

The number was eight figures long. In a week, he had rocketed through 20 million views.

It was considered a success if one reached 1 million view, yet his view count was increasing by 3 million everyday. This was beyond his imagination. It was a jackpot.

As the one, who had won the jackpot, Ahn-jaehyun had a smile on his face. He looked like a deranged person, but it was to be expected.

‘Wow. This is spooky. This is on a frightening level.’

There were 3 million playbacks everyday. If a one per 1,000 people donated a dollar, then he would receive \$3,000.

Even if he discounted the donations, his current ad revenue couldn’t even be compared to the ones he received before.

His earnings didn’t end there.

Ooohng!

Ahn-jaehyun’s smartwatch vibrated to announce the arrival of texts. Ahn-jaehyun had a happy smile as he checked the figures on

his smartwatch.

[WR Entertainment has deposited \$500.] [DBC has deposited \$500.] [TW Contents has deposited \$500.]

The smile on Ahn-jaehyun's mouth was so wide that it looked frightening. His smile evoked the villain from the Batman movie. He looked like the Joker.

Warlord was watched by everyone in the world, so the contents related to Warlord was popular. Currently, a very large number of media companies were creating contents related to Warlord. They were in a position where they needed to broadcast the Waltz video.

This was par for the course, but the media companies needed to enter into a contract with him to air the copyrighted Waltz video. Ahn-jaehyun was well acquainted with how this industry worked. When he uploaded his Waltz video, he had put up a copyright fee of \$500. It would allow the contractors to use the video for 1 year.

‘At the time, I thought \$500 was a bit too high....’

The amount was a bit higher than normal.

He wasn't from a decent sized guild. If one was uploading a personal, it was inevitable for the content to be sparse even if the quality could be overlooked.

Ahn-jaehyun had decided on the contract fee of \$500, but in truth, it had been an audacious move. Instead of setting a very low contract fee from the beginning, he had bet on himself. He had been confident that he would be producing impactful videos in the future, and he was sure his worth would rise significantly in the future.

Still, the media companies were acknowledging Ahn-jaehyun's potential now, and they had willingly entered into the \$500 contract.

‘Well, \$500 is probably the price of a chewing gum compared to the money these big media companies used.’

On top of all of this, there was one more sector that had acknowledged Ahn-jaehyun's worth.

‘They want to insert their sponsored logo into 3 of my videos for \$70,000 dollars.....’

It was the sponsors.

Up until now, Ahn-jaehyun had received several sponsor contracts. However, most of them had been sponsors that were trying to enter into a contract on the cheap with Ahn-jaehyun before he got big. There was even one that had proposed a three year contract for \$3,000.

However, it was different now.

This particular sponsor wanted a total of three videos. The 3 videos would include the Waltz video and two future videos. They were willing to deposit \$70,000 if their sponsored logo was inserted into the videos!

Of course, there was an additional condition. This would have to be an exclusive deal where only their sponsored logo would be inserted into the videos.

‘The conditions are good.’

This was an exclusive contract, but that wasn’t necessarily a bad thing. The contract dealt with the number of videos instead of the time he would be bound to the contract. Ahn-jaehyun would have to put the sponsored logo into his two future videos, and the contract would come to an end.

‘The sponsor is better.’

The thing that made this deal much more attractive him was the fact that VV Enterprise was the one suggesting this sponsorship deal.

VV was the acronym for Virtual Videos. They were a company with cutting-edge technology in producing virtual reality videos.

Virtual reality videos were videos viewed using the VR machine.

This wasn't like a simple movie where one viewed the movie as a third party. This wasn't a 2D movie either. One could enjoy the movie through the main character's POV or some other unexpected POV.

VV possessed technological prowess, and they liked to sponsor skilled virtual reality gamers. Basically, they were like the sports star marketing companies akin to Nike and Adidas.

The fact that VV was offering a contract meant they had rated Ahn-jaehyun highly!

There was no reasons to decline this contract.

‘I'll sign a contract with VV.’

He had the copyright contracts, donations, ad revenues and now a sponsor contract!

After finishing his calculation, Ahn-jaehyun wiped away the unsightly smile off of his mouth, and he let out a sigh.

“Hoo-ooh.”

He had been worrying about his food money only a couple days ago. Who could have guessed such a turn of events would happen?

In some ways, he had made a narrow escape.

Ahn-jaehyun let out a sigh, and he happily thought about the luxury items he would buy.

‘I’ll go to the market tomorrow. I’ll put some pork neck into the kimchi-jjigae. I’ll also buy couple cans of Spam.’

Ahn-jaehyun was getting ready to buy tremendous luxury items.

‘Moreover, when the lump sum of money comes in after the contract with the sponsor... Yes, I’ll gather ingredients, and I’ll make custom uniforms. It’ll look awesome if all my Skeletons wore the same clothes.’

Of course, others will be the ones being decked out in real luxury.

9.

Ten Skeleton Warriors wore garbs that was made out of the hide of some primitive beast. The clothes were made out of shaggy furs. Each of the Skeleton Warriors wore Bone Helms, and they all held identical swords in their hands. The gray colored fur clothes was glistening with luster. It almost looked as if the fur was wet.

Kuh-huhng, kuh-huhng!

There was a Black Hound being surrounded by a group of Skeleton Warriors.

The Black Hound was penned in as it let out consecutive rough barks. It looked around its surrounding.

It had so much murderous intent in its barks that a normal person would have unconsciously stepped backwards. It was that terrifying.

However, the Skeleton Warriors weren't people, so they didn't budge an inch. They started to slowly close the encirclement.

As the encirclement closed, the Black Hound must have felt suffocated. The Black Hound jumped away like a spring.

Tah-aht!

After jumping away once, the Black Hound immediately bit into the shoulder of the nearest Skeleton Warrior.

Kwah-jeek!

The Skeleton Warrior's body made a sound that was reminiscent of a candy being chewed.

An incredible event occurred afterwards. The ferocious dog, which never let go of something it bit, spit out the Skeleton Warrior.

[Black Hound has been poisoned by Poison Mink's Venom.]

This was the effect of the Poison Mink's Venom.

Poison Mink.

It had a cute name, so some people mistook it for being a cute monster. In reality, it was a hairy monster over 5 meters tall. It looked like Bigfoot. It was a level 110 Boss Monster, and its special characteristic was the thick poisonous fur that covered its body. This was why it was named the Poison Mink.

The defensive gears were made from the ingredients gathered from the Poison Mink, and it had the special effect was poisoning anyone, who touched the gear.

The Poison Mink's Venom was special in that the poison had a rare abnormal effect.

Paralysis of the Five Senses!

When one was poisoned by the Poison Mink's Venon, the function of one's five senses decreased temporarily.

'It's worth the high price!'

The Black Hound with its five senses temporarily dulled headed towards Hyrkan.

Hooong!

Hyrkan swung his sword, and the Black Hound intercepted it with its mouth.

Kwah-jeeek!

The Black Hound chewed on Hyrkan's sword as if it was a bone.

Hyrkan put strength into his sword as if he was trying to cut through the Black Hound's mouth. However, the Black Hound refused to back down as it resisted.

It was a battle of strength vs strength.

In the end, Hyrkan was inferior.

Hyrkan's body was being pushed back. Even if Hyrkan was an all-strength Necromancer, he wouldn't be able to win against a level 130 monster in terms of strength.

The Skeleton Knight moved, while this was occurring.

On the opposite side of Hyrkan, the Skeleton Knight readied

itself. It didn't miss the golden opportunity created by its master.

It charged the Black Hound with its sword raised in front of it. It used the sword like a spear, and the sword embedded deep into the Black Hound's body.

[The Black Hound has fallen under the Demon Curse.] [The Black Hound has fallen under the Slow Curse.] [The Black Hound has fallen under the Corrosive Ghost.] [The Black Hound has fallen under the Slow Curse.]

In a flash, the four Curses within the Skeleton Knight's sword took hold on the Black Hound.

When the Curses activated, Hyrkan came to a complete stop. At the same time, the teeth biting Hyrkan's sword started to shake. As time progressed, it started to shake harder.

Eventually, Hyrkan scratched the Black Hound's teeth as he started to crack open its mouth.

Poo-hwaht!

Hyrkan's sword forced the the Black Hound's jaws to open wider.

Kuh-huhng!

The Black Hound struggled in pain as its mouth was being forced open. At that moment, the Skeleton Knight brought down his sword again on the Black Hound's body.

Kwah-jeek!

It sliced through flesh, and the sound of bones being crushed was heard.

Poohk poohk!

Afterwards, all the Skeleton Warriors stabbed with their swords. The Black Hound struggled mightily.

The Skeleton Knight and Skeleton Warriors backed away, so they wouldn't get tangled into the Black Hound's struggling body.

Kooh-roo-roo!

After its struggles stopped, the Black Hound looked at its surrounding with its guard up.

'This will be number 100 of these bastards.'

"As I promised before, I'll make you all extinct."

10.

[Your Level has increased.] [You've gained the Title 'Black Hound Hunter'.] [You've earned the Title 'Great Urugal Mountain's Novice Hunter']

When the Level Up ended, Hyrkan looked at his surrounding.

The Skeleton Warriors wore identical fur clothes. They looked imposing as they stared back at Hyrkan.

'They look really cool.'

Hyrkan was more satisfied with the sight than the level up.

'It was worth it to spend a lot of money on them.'

The Skeletons weren't his girlfriends, yet he felt satisfied at gifting them Mink coats. He was probably the only human on earth, who felt that way.

Of course, Hyrkan was satisfied. He had acquired the Poison Mink ingredients to manufacture these items, and the items were better than expected. He was satisfied with the effects of the poison. The Paralysis of the Five Senses was most effective in controlling the aggro of the monsters.

This was why Hyrkan was able to level up quickly at the entrance of the Great Urugal Mountain.

He had gained a Title. The Title 'Black Hound Hunter' increased his Stamina by 10 points, and the 'Great Urugal Mountain's Novice Hunter' increased his class-specific stats by 10 points. Both of them were great titles. It was one of the reasons why he had decided to hunt at the Great Urugal Mountain. We wanted to obtain the titles.

If one had the ability to hunt properly at the Great Urugal Mountain, one could earn a lot of Titles. It was a repository for Titles.

'If I could have it my way, I want to stay here until I reach level 130, but....'

Hyrkan glanced at the peak of the Great Urugal mountain. The entrance to the Great Urugal mountain range was a really good hunting ground. There weren't that many users, who operated around this location, so there weren't many competitors. The monsters that showed up here were diverse compared to the other regions. Moreover, people liked to view monster hunting videos from this location.

Normally, he would have leveled up as much as possible at such a location.

'The Quest is more important.'

However, it wasn't time yet.

Hyrkan once again checked the content of the Quest he received from Maeung.

[Cursed Domain] – Quest Rank : Rare

– Quest Level Range : Over Level 120

– Quest Content : Corrupted Comrade. Please investigate Ivan's Mission 'Cursed Domain' in his stead.

– Quest Reward : Skill Book

This was the Quest that was given to him by Maeung when he received the Ivan's Sword and the Corruption Destroyer's Necklace.

He had to reach level 120 to progress in this Quest, so he made leveling up his highest priority. In truth, if he there weren't any level restrictions, he would have moved immediately towards the Cursed Domain.

However, Hyrkan had been hunting to reach level 120, so he had given his competitors enough time to be able chase after him.

‘The Stormhunters put their Quest progress behind closed doors, so I have no idea how far... I have to accept that I might not be the front-runner in the future.’

It was especially true for this Quest route, since his competitor was the Stormhunters guild.

He had given them enough time to be able to catch up to him. Basically, he had given them a window where they could have surpassed him. Maybe the Stormhunters guild had also received the Cursed Domain Quest, and they might be carrying it out right now. If he was unlucky, he might even run across the Stormhunters, while carrying out the Quest.

Even if he didn’t come across them, everyone would try to keep him in check now. It was inevitable.

The world worked that way. As one climbs higher, one encounters stiffer winds. If he was running towards becoming the best, he had to overcome these obstacles.

Thanks to the recording of the big hit called the Waltz, Ahn-jaehyun had been able to strengthen his forces extensively. He had equipped 20 Skeletons with rare items, and he had passed his Golden Praying Mantis Scythe Sword to his Skeleton Knight.

It was clear to see.

Hyrkan was quickly closing the distance between him and the lead group. When he closes the distance and pass them, he would open up a bottle of champagne.

In other words, he had a long way to go before he could uncork that bottle of champagne.

Hyrkan's facial expression settled into a cold mask.

Chapter 97. Cursed Domain (1)

[Hyrkan]

- Level : 122
- Class : Necromancer
- Title : 66
- Stats : Strength(1351)/Stamina(598)/Intelligence(789)/Magic Power(883)

He was checking his Stats through the Hologram Window, and one side of his lips started to droop. He frowned as if he was upset. At a glance, one could tell something had soured his mood.

Hyrkan walked towards a densely wooded area as he continued to frown. Hyrkan started moving between the trunks of the trees when he suddenly disappeared.

It happened 10 seconds after Hyrkan disappeared.

“Uh? Where is he?”

“What? Wasn’t he here until a moment ago? Why can’t we see him?”

“Search carefully! He was here a moment ago!”

The three Users started to look around the the location where Hyrkan had gone missing.

Two of the Users was wearing armor, and one User was wearing a priest's robe. This was a party made out of two Swordsman and a Priest.

They weren't wearing particularly expensive items. It was a mixture of Rare and Normal Rank Items. There wasn't any uniformity in the Items they had on. This was especially true for the armors. The two users looked unsightly in their armors.

Hyrkan was looking down at the Users from atop a tree branch, and he still had an unpleasant smile on his face. As he was smiling, Hyrkan took a handful of Skeleton Fragments out of his pocket, and he threw it towards the ground.

Too-too-toohk!

The Skeleton Fragments rained down like hail, and one of them hit a User's helm.

Toohng!

It lightly hit his helm.

“Huh?”

A dull sound rang out inside his helm, and the User lifted his head up in confusion. When he looked up, he saw a large object falling from the sky. That was all he saw.

Poohk!

A white sword pierced through the helm to lodge itself in between the User's eyes. Of course, he didn't see the sword strike.

“Uh. What the hell?”

It sounded as if the User had suffered an accident instead of being attacked. The words that slipped out the User's mouth was something one would say when one suffered a mishap.

The person directly involved didn't react properly. However, his two companions had the proper reaction.

“It's the Hahoe Mask!”

“Shit!”

Accompanying the shouts, one of the two remaining party members swung his sword towards Hyrkan. Hyrkan had just landed on the floor and his sword was still stuck between the User's eyes.

Shweek!

Hyrkan easily avoided the horizontal sword strike. The attack wasn't that fast, and it was lacking in terms of technique. Moreover, he hadn't used any Skills. The attack was like child's play to Hyrkan.

The sword, which had lost its target, immediately hit the other party member, who had been standing next to Hyrkan.

Ggahhng!

It was a joke of a sword, but the User, who had swung the sword, had a decent amount of Strength Stat. The sword strike immediately put a dent in his comrade's armor.

“Ooh-ahk!”

The blinded User finally reacted in a way befitting the situation.

“I...I'm sorry!”

“Sorry? Why the hell did you attack me? What's going on right now?”

“The Hahoe Mask was above our heads!”

“Really? Where is he right now?”

“He’s next to you!”

“What?”

The blinded user became frightened, and he started to show vigilance against his surrounding. Of course, he had the Blind status, so he couldn’t see anything.

“Cure! Someone Cure me!”

“Yes. All right!”

Hyrkan stared blankly at their antics as he stood several steps away.

The scene of the rag tag group struggling didn’t amuse Hyrkan. It actually made him depressed.

The three of them took advantage of Hyrkan’s consideration. They were afforded a brief respite, so the three of them got into formation. Then they shouted towards Hyrkan.

“Hyrkan! We challenge you!”

Hyrkan didn’t answer their shouted words. He didn’t even get into his fighting stance.

The Skeleton Warriors, who had already formed, moved instead of Hyrkan.

“Uh? Uh!”

The situation had already come to an end. The five Skeleton Warriors wore the Poison Mink fur armor, and the monsters were too powerful for the half-assed 3 man party to handle.

Hyrkan didn't even need to participate in the battle. It wasn't worth it, and the situation resolved itself in a dull manner. Hyrkan cut off the wrist watch from the User's corpses. He mumbled to himself in a brusque manner.

‘This is the tenth group.’

The view on his Waltz video had broke through the 70 million mark. The view count wasn't showing any signs of slowing down. The ripple effect caused by the video was currently getting larger.

A snowball was rolling down a snow-covered mountain.

The Waltz video was a big hit, and of course, it had been mentioned in the media. The media attention would once again focus the public's interest on the video. It basically started a feedback loop.

In this process, the Hahoe Mask's worth naturally rose, and when his worth rose, the number of groups hunting for his head increased.

Of course, no one would give a reward for taking down Hyrkan. Warlord didn't have such a system.

Still, logic didn't necessarily pass muster in this game. Why were so many people trying to catch Hyrkan? Currently, Hyrkan wasn't suspicious of the situation. He just considered it to be an unwelcoming situation.

'There really are a lot of weird bastards that want to pick a fight with me.'

In the past, he would have smiled at the watches that automatically dropped into his lap. He would have cut off the wrists of customers, and he would have considered their watches to be a donation.

Thank you very much!

He would have thanked them.

However, the current Hyrkan wasn't the past Hyrkan.

'They think I'm fair game? Is that what's going on?'

Currently, Hyrkan couldn't make a big profit by taking watches away from mediocre users. It would be more beneficial if he could kill one more monster than wasting his time on these Users.

Moreover, the fact that the mediocre Users were targeting Hyrkan was sure evidence that Hyrkan was being seen as an easy target.

Of course, it isn't as if there weren't any reasons for this to be true. First, Hyrkan's guild affiliation wasn't formally known. He was unaffiliated.

The fact that he was unaffiliated meant Users won't have to worry about a possible backlash.

Even if Hyrkan was amazing, he was soloing this game. For Warlord Users, a high head count was the ultimate trump card.

There wasn't anything that could beat sheer number of Users!

This was a law akin to law of gravity to Warlord Users.

In the Warlord User's minds, Hyrkan was someone that could be killed if the numerical advantage could be pressed.

The bigger problem for Hykran was the fact that there was another faction, who thought along the same line as the normal Users.

Guilds!

Other groups were looking down on Hyrkan more so than the Users.

‘If I idle here, I’ll get swept up into a dog fight, and I might be put down like a dog.’

He was in danger

He could power through here, and he could create a stronghold for himself. On the other hand, if he wasted his time here, he wouldn't be able close the distance with the frontrunners. He would be stuck without being able to improve on his standing.

Hyrkan was well aware of the danger, so this was why Hyrkan wasn't in a good mood.

While Hyrkan had an ill-humored expression on his face, he took out a Gem. He melted the Gem using Clay Play. When the melted Gem reached the floor, it immediately transformed into a long-legged Lizard Golem.

Hyrkan rode on the back of the Lizard. He spoke as he dug his heels into the side of Lizard.

“Drive Mode, destination Missandra's Castle.”

After receiving its order, the Lizard Golem started to run quickly. Hyrkan opened his Hologram Window, and he replayed a video.

– We are currently entering the second phase. There hasn't been any casualties yet. There is a 98% chance that our plan will succeed.

It was the Stormhunter's Boss Raid video.

Warlord Users watched successful Raid videos, so they could review and make preparation. It was impossible to learn everything through actual experience.

‘I have to study hard.’

Of course, he had to do more to become stronger.

‘If I progress in the Main Scenario Quest, I’ll be able to gain a lot of Chronicle Unique Items.’

If one wanted to get strong in Warlord, one needed Items with powerful Options.

‘I have to lay the foundation, so I can get up to the level of the Ranked Users.’

He had to lay down these foundations, so he could become truly powerful as he leveled up.

‘Just wait a little bit for me. When I level up into the Rankings, I’ll tie those, who dared to touch me, including the guilds. I’ll cut all their hands and necks.’

Hyrkan knew better than anyone on how he could get over his current difficulties.

Hyrkan headed towards the Cursed Domain.

Apollo had a corpulent body that made one sympathize with the armor he wore. A User wearing a robe approached him.

“The Hahoe Mask is said to be moving towards the southeast..”

“Is that so?”

“While he is moving, he has taken down a significant number of users.”

“Is that so?”

Apollo’s answer was very short. When he heard Apollo’s answer, the User named Jiang carefully brought up a question.

“So why do we have to pay so much attention to the Hahoe Mask?”

Jiang had become an officer of the Apollo guild, so he could receive the crumbs off of Apollo’s table. In truth, he didn’t care what Apollo did if he continued to receive the crumbs off of Apollo’s table. The other officers didn’t question Apollo’s decisions. They just did what he asked, then they did what they wanted behind his back.

However, it was hard to understand Apollo’s decision. He

couldn't hold back his curiosity. This was why Jiang had posed his question. Moreover, Jiang was the first one to ask Apollo a question amongst the executive members of the Apollo guild.

Apollo opened his narrow eyes when he heard Jiang's question. If someone saw him right now, one would think he still had his eyes closed.

Jiang added more details to his words.

“To be truthful, the Hahoe Mask did kill our guild members. However, it wasn't an egregious enough offense to invest this much resource into the revenge? This is especially true if we consider the amount of money we invested into the Red Lake incident.... It was a large sum of money, but what benefits did we gain?”

“Hoong.”

Apollo let out a loud snort at his words. Accompanying the snort, Apollo spoke what was inside his mind. This was the first time he had done so.

“I don't care about bastards like the Hahoe Mask, who shine for a brief moment.”

Jiang's eyes narrowed.

Apollo was a greedy and vindictive pig. Still, his intelligence

wasn't on the level of a pig.

He was capable of using his head.

No, he thought in shrewd ways when needed. He had a lot of greed and obsessions. It was akin to a starving pig with food in front of it. The pig sometimes came up with ingenious ideas to get to the food.

It seemed this was the moment where Apollo had come up with an ingenious idea.

“Listen to me closely, Jiang. Currently, we have a hold over Heh-bibin.”

Jiang nodded his head.

Apollo had contracted out the hunting of the Hahoe Mask to Heh-bibin, and Heh-bibin had failed. The funny part was that Hahoe Mask didn't know Heh-bibin and Big Smile had targeted him. However, Apollo knew the truth.

Moreover, the weapons that was borrowed from Big Smiles was used in hunting the Hahoe Mask. The Hahoe Mask also didn't know about this. Apollo was the only one, who knew about it.

This was Heh-bibin's weak point.

“Moreover, the Big Smile isn’t in a good state right now. Aren’t they?”

“That’s true.”

On top of that, the Big Smiles guild wasn’t on good standing amongst the 30 great guilds. Recently, they got some breathing room, but it wasn’t as if they had made an official truce with the Triple Wing. There were plenty of reasons to believe that the war would continue sooner or later.

The Big Smiles had a stubborn problem.

They lacked killer contents.

The guilds that fought for the top spots amongst the 30 great guilds all had unique contents. This was their strong point.

The guilds like Red Bulls and Stormhunters showed overwhelming skills in Raids. The Hydra Guild showed the uncanny ability of progressing in the Main Scenario Quest, and any Quests related to it. In the case of the Sweepers guild, they had a unique content called the Monster Sweep.

However, the Big Smiles guild was a bit different. They were a large guild, yet they weren’t really good at anything.

To be blunt, if they weren’t a guild made out of mostly Chinese Users, they wouldn’t even be in the 30 great guilds. The market

called China had elevated them to their current status.

Basically, they couldn't get out of this with their own efforts. If they can't get out of their troubles using their own efforts, then they could be influenced by outside forces.

“Perhaps?”

When he heard the story, Jiang had a thought.

“Yes. I'm not aiming for scraps like the Hahoe Mask. I want an executive seat in the Big Smiles guild. That is what I want.”

Apollo started to laugh.

“I've already finished my negotiations with Brooks. Brooks will look out for my back now.”

Apollo was aiming for an executive seat inside Big Smiles. Moreover, he had won over one of Big Smile's executives. If Apollo fulfilled certain conditions, Brooks was willing to bring in Apollo into the Big Smiles guild. From Brooks' perspective, there was no downside in having an amicable relationship with Apollo, who had a stout background.

The problem was Brooks' accident had caused a war between Triple Wings and Big Smiles. This in turn weakened Brooks, but on the other hand, it had elevated Heh-bibin's influence.

In such a situation, what if one knew about Heh-bibin's weak point?

Jiang was impressed.

‘His head works really well in certain situations.’

He had thought Apollo only cared about greed and money. He never expected him to come up with such a plan.

At the same time, greed took hold inside Jiang.

‘It's a good thing I asked him about it. This opportunity is a jackpot.’

If Apollo could become an executive of the Big Smiles guild, the Apollo guild would be absorbed into the Big Smiles guild. The executive members of the Apollo guild would be treated pretty well inside the Big Smile guild.

If one received preferential treatment from one of the 30 Great guilds, it was akin to making a transition from a civilian to noble status in the middle ages.

Jiang lowered his head.

“As expected of our guild master, the scale of the plot you think

about is on a different level. I thought you had been trying to catch a mouse like the Hahoe Mask. You planned on using the mouse as bait to capture a whale.”

“Yes. A man like me should fish for a whale instead of a small fish. Isn’t it?”

“You are correct.”

He immediately spat out a flattery.

Apollo had a generous smile on his face as he listened to Jian’s flattery.

Chapter 98. Cursed Domain (2)

Hyrkan stared intently at a large boulder. The boulder didn't look too special on the outside. In truth, the boulder wasn't anything special.

Took took.

Hyrkan used a shovel to dig up the fine soil near the boulder. There would have been no significance to this boulder if an Ingredient Coin hadn't appeared inside the hole.

“Chet.”

Hyrkan clicked his tongue after checking the Ingredient Coin. His expression naturally changed into a sour expression.

‘In the end, I’m back to the same location.’

He put the Ingredient Coin back into his pocket. Hyrkan closed his eyes with a frown on his lips.

‘I never expected this to turn out like this.’

Hyrkan knew where the Cursed Domain was located at. It was one of the important parts of the Main Scenario Quest, so of course, he knew where it was located at. It was located southeast of Misandra's Castle, where there was a tall mountain called the

Ricky mountain. There was a long winding road past the Ricky mountain, and one had to cross the Inue Lake! One finally reached the boundary of the Cursed Domain after crossing all of those landmarks.

If one could pinpoint a location to this degree in Warlord, one was basically as knowledgeable as a navigator.

However, he was currently going around in circles. He couldn't even get past the Ricky Mountain.

'I had no idea the Block Field was still up. This is really unexpected.'

Block Field.

No Users could get past this barrier, and it was in the way of Hyrkan.

The Block Field was placed beyond the Ricky Mountain, and Hyrkan already knew the Block Field hadn't been dispelled yet. It was something one could confirm through several internet searches.

Still, he never thought the Block Field would be a problem for him.

'I've received the Quest, yet the Block Field is still present... This is a pain.'

Hyrkan had received the Main Scenario Quest. In most cases, the Main Scenario Quest acted as a key in dissolving the Block Field. This was why Hyrkan hadn't worried over the Block Field. He had been worried about getting to the Cursed Domain faster than everyone else. He wanted to get there first, and he wanted to eat all those delicious Titles.

'Some random bastards tried to block my path before and now such a trivial thing is blocking my path.'

Of course, this fact didn't have all negative connotations.

Instead, it could be seen as a positive news.

'The fact that the Block Field is around means the Cursed Domain is still intact... It means the Storm Hunters haven't reached this place yet or they are progressing in a different Quest route as me... I like that.'

The possibility of the Stormhunters guild receiving the same Quest to search for the Cursed Domain, and them being ahead of him was gone.

It was an element that was sufficiently positive.

'All right.'

Hyrkan let go of his sour mood, and he organized his situation.

His next task was set. He had to dispel the Block Field. A Block Field couldn't be dispelled by force.

‘It's been awhile since the Misandra's Castle was released to the Users. I'm sure the Quests are completed up to a certain point.’

Hyrkan turned his head. First, he had to return to the Misandra Castle.

‘Huh?’

As if it had been waiting for Hyrkan to turn his head, a monster appeared behind Hyrkan.

Koo-roo-roo.....!

Koo-huhng! Koo-huhng!

It was a wolf human standing on its two feet. It was a werewolf. It was different from a normal werewolf. It was holding very rusty knives in both hands.

It was a level 100 monster called Weapon Werewolf.

Amongst the level 100 mid-sized monsters, it was a monster of

average difficulty. It wasn't hard to kill, but it wasn't easy to kill either... Basically, it was a middle of the road monster.

Four of them appeared. At the very least, it was numerous enough where a single User wouldn't be able to easily deal with them.

However, Hyrkan didn't even unsheathe his Ivan's Sword when the pack appeared. He didn't even snort at their appearance.

Instead, he flicked his fingers twice.

This caused the Skeleton Warriors that had been on standby to appear from behind the Weapon Werewolves. They held golden colored swords that looked to be made by smelting gold.

Kuhng!

As if they were surprised by the appearance of the Skeletons, the Weapon Werewolves desperately turned their bodies.

The battle started immediately.

Kwahng!

The Werewolves let out a roar as they charged first. The eyes of the Skeleton Warriors and Knight burned as they silently looked at the Werewolves. They dodged the incoming attack, and their

fighter's disposition was strong enough to cut the enemies with a single stroke.

Hyrkan had a sour expression on his face as he opened his Hologram Window. Then he searched for more information.

‘No 30 great guilds are present in Misandra's Domain. There aren't even Underfoot guilds there. This might be more annoying than I thought it would be. Any ways, what should I have for dinner tonight?’

Hyrkan was starting to fight battles in a way that was befitting a Necromancer.

Misandra's Castle was revealed to the Warlord Users around 2 months ago.

In the world of gaming, two month was almost like two years. It wasn't a short amount of time, and a lot of Users had visited Misandra's Castle. They wanted to dispel the Block Field present beyond the castle. This was why they diligently found and cleared the Quests.

However, the Block Field would not be easily dispelled. They kept finding likely clues, yet no one could find the actual key.

In a situation like this, the Users made a simple judgement call.

“Oh well. I'll just go hunt somewhere else.”

“Well, I’ll only get a single Title if the Block Field is dispelled. Wouldn’t it be more profitable to level up at a different hunting ground?”

Give up.

It was the obvious course of action.

Not many Users were willing to invest their time here when it hindered with one’s level up.

Moreover, Misandra’s Castle was located in an ambiguous location.

One could earn Quests between level 80 to 100 at Misandra’s Castle. The level 80 Users diligently did their Quests, and they diligently leveled up.

What happens when they reach level 90?

In Warlord, there was a single goal every users tried to fulfill at level 90. It was to get to level 100 as soon as possible. They wanted to go through the Advancement! If one wanted to go through the Advancement as soon as possible, one had to find an effective hunting ground. Misandra’s Castle was hardly an effective hunting ground, so there was no reason to stay there.

In the end, the Users left for various parts after they completed Quests up to a certain point.

New Users influxed into this location, but they repeated the actions of their predecessors.

Of course, not everyone left.

“Does anyone want to do a Quest with me?”

Zeet.

He was different from the other Users. He was part of the minority of people, who was staying behind at Misandra’s Castle for his Quest progress.

He was level 91, and his Class was Magician.

As a Magician, he couldn’t operate out in the field by himself. This was why he was gathering party members at Misandra’s Subjugation Association. He was trying to progress in his Quest.

“What kind of Quest is it?”

“It is an Exploration Quest. It is a Quest to find the remains...”

“Does it give a lot of EXP? What’s the Reward?”

“It’s an Exploration Quest, so it doesn’t give much EXP nor a lot of rewards.”

“What for?”

“What?”

in the end, his recruiting process always ended on a bad note.

It was the same right now.

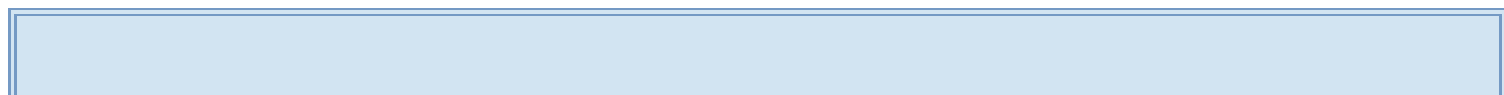
What for?

After saying that phrase, the User turned around and left as if he never wanted to see Zeet again. The User’s action was so cold that Zeet felt a little bit humiliated.

Zeet gritted his teeth.

‘Shit! I should have chosen the Swordsman Class instead... At the very least, I could carry out the quest whether I sink or swim!’

Zeet manipulated his watch as he spoke. He checked the Quest again.



[Blackened Remains]

- Quest Rank : Rare
- Quest Level Range : 90
- Quest Content : Recover the Blackened Remains. Deliver it to the fugitive ‘Chados’.
- Quest Reward : Chados’ Staff.

Blackened Remains Quest.

It was a Rare Rank Quest. It meant it wasn’t an easily obtainable Quest. However, it wasn’t special enough where only Zeet was carrying it out.

It was actually the opposite. If one was diligently leveling up from level 80 to 90 at Misandra’s Castle, one would receive this Quest. The Quest Route had already been made public.

However, there was a Quest that was nicknamed the Diploma. When Users received this Quest, a vast majority of them left Misandra’s Castle to search for another hunting ground. It was as if they had graduated from this location.

There was a reason why Zeet was holding onto this Quest, while

he was stalled in leveling up.

‘I’m sure this Quest is the key that will break open the Block Field.’

Numerous Users went through the Quests available at Misandra’s Castle, and they all reached the Blackened Remains Quest. However, no one had solved the Quest yet. The Block Field remained closed. There was ample reasons why one should be suspicious that this Quest was related to the Block Field.

Of course, one could be suspicious, but it was hard to have conviction about such a conjecture. Zeet was so sure, because while he was progressing another Quest, he had found the identity of Chados.

‘Chados is a fugitive. For some reason, he is a fugitive running away from some unfortunate circumstances.’

Chados was a fugitive that had run away from somewhere across the Block Field. He had heard this story from a NPC caretaker named Dodo, who maintained the castle walls. Moreover, this truth hadn’t been spread anywhere online. Zeet had never disclosed this information to anyone.

This was basically Zeet’s trump card.

He was very sure about his conjecture. He just had to ramp up his efforts in gathering party member. That was the answer.

The problem was.....

“Hey, look who it is? Isn’t it, Zeet?”

Zeet had a disadvantage that no one else had here.

“You are still operating out of Misandra’s Castle? Huh?”

Three Users approached Zeet. The three Users had identical guild emblems on their chests. It was the Swing Guild.

“I thought we squared everything last time!”

Swing Guild.

It was a medium-sized guild with about 300 members. They weren’t considered to be one of the 30 great guilds nor were they part of the Underfoot guilds. They were a guild formed for the purpose of mutual cooperation. The members of the guild consisted of low level Users to pretty high level Users. There were a diverse group of Users gathered in this guild.

Moreover, they were a guild in bad standing with Zeet.

“What did I say? Did I say we’ll smash you to pieces when we find you near the Field?”

“What a strange bastard. We were just wondering why you were still here. We were just curious!!”

‘Shit. They should just be transparent with their threats, sons of bitches!’

It had been a disagreement that happened quite frequently in games.

They had met up by chance, and they had started a party hunt. They bickered, since they weren’t in sync with each other. The bickering escalated.

‘Why are you so lacking?’

‘Like your mother?’

As the conversation escalated, feelings were hurt and there was had been an argument.

Zeet had gotten in a disagreement with a User, and there had been an accident afterwards during the party hunt.

Zeet was a bit late in his assist, so the User that was playing the role of a Tanker had experienced Game Over.

It was an accident born out of a mistake, but the aggrieved User

felt like it was done on purpose.

Afterwards, all of Swing guild didn't see Zeet in a positive light. This was why these Users had spent a long time at Misandra's Castle, yet they operated far from each other.

‘Those damn bastards. They aren't even a 30 great guild, yet... Since I'm alone, they are ganging up on me like a pack of dogs.’

This was the reason why Zeet wasn't able to aggressively further his agenda. This was why he solicited every new Users he saw to join his party.

‘Yes. It isn't that I'm dodging shit, because I'm afraid of it. I'm avoiding it since it is dirty.’

A man appeared in front of Zeet.

‘Uh?’

To escape the attention of the Swing Guild, he was about to head out. At that moment, he came face to face with a User at the door.

He had on a plain armor, and there was a plain sword equipped on his waist. The impression the User gave off.....

‘He has a really gullible face.’

The User really looked like someone that could be tricked.

In a flash, Zeet's eyes checked the other User's Item setting.

‘Swordsman Class!’

At a glance, this User obviously had a setting common to the Swordsman Class. Zeet reflexively asked the man a question.

“Are you perhaps here to receive a Quest?”

The User silently nodded his head.

“Then would you like to do a Quest with me?”

Zeet spoke the next part with a low voice.

“This is a secret, but the Block Field might open if this Quest is completed.”

He wouldn't have made that comment about the Block Field to Normal Users, but the man in front of him looked as if he would fall for anything... He felt this was a chance that would never come again, so he had thrown out the bait.

As if Zeet's bait had taken hold, the User looked at Zeet with an interested expression on his face.

“If it isn’t true, how much are you going to give me?”

“What?”

However, the words and tone of his voice didn’t indicate he was interested. The other User continued to speak.

“If I complete the Quest and the Block Field is still up, how much compensation are you going to give me?”

He was most definitely a pushover, but it seemed Zeet had met someone with a real tiger’s mouth.

Chapter 99. Cursed Domain (3)

A Weapon Werewolf was in three pieces as the corpse was broken and mangled on the ground.

The User, who had been looking at the corpse, whipped his head around. He spoke towards a Magician teammate.

“If you throw magic around like that next time, I’m going to declare a PK match against you.”

“I...I’m sorry.”

The conversation was too brusque and one-sided to call it a conversation between comrades. It was beyond a warning. He had basically delivered a threat. When Zeet received the warning, he immediately apologized instead of getting mad.

‘His temperament is entirely different from his appearance.’

In truth, it was a reaction that didn’t match Zeet’s personality. It wasn’t as if Zeet’s personality was dirty or ill-tempered. Still, he was more rowdy than he was quiet.

His personality had been the reason why he had gotten into a conflict with the Swing Guild. If Zeet had kept quiet when he had minor or emotional disagreements, he wouldn’t have heard words like ‘You better watch out next time you go for a hunt, you son of a bitch!’

However, Zeet had killed his temper for now, and he was deferring to his new partner. The reason was simple.

‘.....his skills are killer.’

His current partner was incredibly skilled.

Truthfully, Zeet was having a hard time believing his current situation.

If he was a normal User, he wouldn't have even offered up a 'I'm sorry'. He would have just turned his head away, but he needed to show sincere concern for this particular partner.

In truth, Zeet had thought his partner was in the category of the unskilled Users. The skilled Users weren't usually interested in what he had to offer. This User seemed to operating on his own, so Zeet thought the User was like a roaming duckweed. He thought this User was like him.

How could Zeet have guessed that this User was so skilled?

“There is one more coming. I'll block it. When it turns it back to you, you should immediately use your magic.”

“Understood.”

Zeet was able to move around much faster as he searched for the Blackened Remains. It was thanks to his skilled partner.

“Be sure of yourself when you throw it. Your timing will be way off if you hesitate like that.”

“I know. I’m sorry. It was a mistake.”

Of course, a skilled partner would require others to be at their best, but it was something Zeet was willing to put up with.

“If the Quest is completed and the Block Field isn’t dispelled, your life...”

“What? What did you just say?”

“Ah, this is just me talking to myself. I’m just talking to myself.”

“Wasn’t your words too clear for it to be you talking to yourself?”

“So are you saying you want to hold a grudge against me?”

“Ah, no. Ah! It’s the werewolf! I’ll start my Casting!”

Sometimes his more skilled partner would joke around. His words were frightening, but Zeet was sure they were jokes. At the very least, Zeet decided to think of it like that.

‘He’s probably joking. If he wasn’t joking....’

Zeet briefly shuddered as he saw his partner run at the Weapon Werewolf to block it. This was how excellent his partner’s skills was. He was so skilled that Zeet had never seen his partner use his Skills even once.

He wasn’t using his Skills, yet he was sufficiently skilled enough to fight off a Weapon Werewolf. This mean his partner was an incredible expert. If one was over level 150 equipped with Unique Items, one could crush a Weapon Werewolf through one’s Spec.

Anyways, Zeet had the experience of partnering up with other parties and guilds. He had partnered up with a variety of parties and Users. He could immediately tell his current partner’s skill was extraordinary.

‘This is really my last opportunity.’

Moreover, the opportunity to work with such a skilled partner was hard to come by.

This was why on the third day of Blackened Remains Exploration Quest, Zeet revealed the information he had been hiding.

“Shall I tell you about the Blackened Remain Quest?”

“You’ve been keeping your mouth shut until now. So why are you telling me right now?”

“It just means the information I have is worth a lot. It isn’t something I would tell someone at a first meeting.”

“All right. Tell me.”

This meant Zeet was ready to trust his partner this time, and he was showing his conviction in his desire to finish the Black Remains Quest.

“If you search for the Black Remains Quest, you’ll hit on a lot of search results. It is basically the terminus Quest one can receive at Misandra’s Castle. Still, why was no one able to solve it? What was the reason? The biggest reason was quite simple. It took time to break this Quest. Users wanted to level up and go do their Advancement. It was more wise and profitable to focus on leveling up than the Quest.”

Zeet.

He had arrived at the Misandra’s Castle when it was first released. He hadn’t come here with some goal in mind. In the first place, he didn’t have friends, partners, or a guild to play this game with. He followed his feelings as he roamed towards various locations like a floating duckweed. He bounced around doing adventures, and he had arrived at Misandra’s Castle by coincidence.

Moreover, he hadn't stayed at the Misandra's Castle with some specific goal in mind. His level coincided with Misandra's Castle, and it was a decent place to work out of. That was the sole reason why he stayed there.

The fun part for Zeet was the fact that he was able to acquire a variety of information as Users and groups passed through Misandra's Castle.

This method was quite inefficient if one wanted to Level Up or Spec Up at this location. However, it was a very effective way to acquire information.

This was why Zeet was able to gather as much information that could be used in Scenario Quests around Misandra's Castle.

“Let's return to the topic at hand. Beyond the Misandra's Castle, I think there might be an Event Location there.”

Zeet's partner appropriately showed interest in Zeet's words.

“What's the basis for this?”

“If you look at the NPCs at Misandra's castle, several of them have the Titles of Fugitive or Refugee.”

“So?”

“As I progressed through the Quests related to the Subjugation Association, I increased my Intimacy Level with the NPCs. That was when I started hearing a particular expression being repeated. The most typical expression was ‘Beyond there...’ Basically, they were trying to express something ominous was present beyond the mountain, where the Block Field was present.”

“Maybe, the monsters gave them the ominous feeling.”

“These are NPCs within the Subjugation Association, where the purpose of the Association was to subjugate the monsters. If there were monsters, they would usually talk about how they would catch the monsters. They typically don’t worry about how to avoid the monsters, because of the ominous feeling they felt.”

“You are quite knowledgeable about this game.”

“Look here, man. I spent 8 hours a day since Warlord was opened.”

“Yet you are only at that level?”

“This game is very unfair. In truth, my situation is quite normal. Warlord is overflowing with Scenario Quests even if we discounted the Main Scenario Quest. Each NPC in a castle all has at least one Scenario Quest. I don’t want to jump from one hunting ground to another. Isn’t it stranger to hop to another location like grasshoppers just because one wants a little bit more EXP? What kind of game is that? Even miners working in mines don’t operate like that.”

“Continue with your story.”

“All right. I’ll return to the main point. I’ve spoken to all the NPCs inside Misandra’s Castle, and from their conversations, I’ve determined this might not be a Block Field. There is a high probability that this is a barrier instead of a Block Field. There is something across it, and the barrier is to block this thing from coming to Misandra’s Castle.”

“So what’s the connection between the barrier and the Blackened Remains?”

“The Blackened Remains that is mentioned in the Blackened Remains Quest might be a symbolism. Well, that part isn’t that important. The important fact is that a lot of Users had tried to clear this. There was no downside in doing it. However, a lot of Users got frustrated trying to clear this quest, and no one was able to finish it. Do you know why?”

“It was more profitable to go for the Advancement.”

Zeet had a mysterious smile on his face when he heard his partner’s words.

“Think hard on it. Quite a lot of resolute users have tried this search. Let me simplify it for you. Weren’t the Users trying to hunting, and conduct the search at the same time? This was what had happened. Naturally, the searches near level 90 monsters happened more frequently than other location. In other

words.....”

“Not many people searched the low level hunting grounds.”

“Yes. That was their blind spot. There are hunting grounds around here where low level monsters appear. However, no one would concentrate on those hunting grounds. What crazy low level Users would come to a place that’s considered to be the last stop on a Quest?”

Zeet’s eyes shone as he spoke.

This was the background information on why Zeet had been obsessed with this Quest, and it was also the reason why he was so sure he could clear the Blackened Remains Quest.

At the same time, he had never told anyone about this truth. In truth, if he told someone else about this, other would have cleared the Quest instead of him. Moreover, if someone posted this online, the person would probably get praised online.

However, that would be the end of that.

Zeet wanted to be the main character in this story.

Moreover, he hadn’t met a partner, who actually wanted to help him. This was why he never spoke what was inside his heart.

Truthfully, Zeet wanted to be a protagonist for this particular Quest. As he had told his partner, he had played this game for a long time. He wanted to leave an achievement that was all his own. He would feel a little bit of return for the amount of money and time he had invested in this game.

During all that time, there were only a handful of people, who even wanted to listen to his offer. Amongst all of them, this was the first time he had a partner, who would follow his instructions for 3 days. It didn't matter how much he complained.

“Therefore, if we move to the locations where there are low level monsters, we might find it.”

“Correct!”

This was why Zeet was thankful. It was good fortune that he had met a good partner. Although, he didn't look to have a good personality.

“Be happy. This is the first time I've revealed this information to anyone else.”

His partner smiled for the first time at Zeet's words. It made him feel a sense of deja vu as if he had seen that smile from some video before.

This was a hunting ground where a monster slightly above level 60 appeared. The Sick Werewolf appeared here.

This hunting ground was located a bit farther away from Misandra's Castle, so it wasn't that popular. The biggest problem was the fact that one would have to get past a hunting ground filled with level 80 monsters to reach this place.

Moreover, the adjacent hunting grounds all had monsters that exceeded level 80.

It was basically a hunting ground with mines located everywhere. It wasn't a place where one could hunt comfortably.

If it wasn't for that reason, it was actually a nice hunting ground where there were no competitors.

The Swing Guild had members of diverse levels. To help the low level guild members, it wasn't strange for them to come hunt at locations where the Sick Werewolves appeared.

"What are you doing here, Zeet?"

If Zeet hadn't shown up with a new partner, there wouldn't have been any problems.

"I'm just passing by. I'm passing through here."

Zeet saw six guild members. It was a party with 2 women and four men. Within the game, he felt a chill run up his spine when he

saw the group.

His first thoughts was ‘Why were these Users here in the first place?’ Moreover, he never expected it to be the Swing guild.

On the other side, the Swing guild considered this to be a pretty good opportunity.

Users, who had spent a decent amount of time at Misandra’s Castle, all knew Zeet had put in a lot of effort in trying to progress in the Blackened Remains Quest.

The Swing Guild members were all thinking along the same line.

‘Is the Blackened Remains here?’

This was why Zeet was taken aback. In truth, he had been afraid of this happening. This was why he hadn’t come here even if he suspected this was the location.

‘Shit. I had to run into the Swing Guild, of all the people.....’

If the Swing Guild realized what was going on, they wouldn’t let Zeet go easily.

“You are just passing through? Who gave you permission to be able to pass through here? This place is within our guild’s jurisdiction.”

When he heard those words, Zeet immediately knew what the Swing guild members were thinking.

‘These bastards have a rough idea of what going on. It was inevitable. Those bastards were always interested in every one of my moves.’

They wouldn’t easily believe his words.

“Why are you barking out nonsense? No guild can block someone from passing through a field. Even the 30 great guilds don’t act that way!”

“I don’t care if normal Users pass through here. However, you have an account to settle with our guild.”

“What account?”

“One of our guild member suffered Game Over because of you. Of course, you have to settle that account.”

There were two reasons why the Swing Guild had done nothing to Zeet. They had watched him, while they grinded their teeth.

First, they weren’t allowed to PK within the castle grounds. PK was possible, but they would be cussed out by everyone for carrying it out.

It was possible to do it outside in the fields, but Zeet always moved with a new party. He wasn't officially affiliated with any groups. If they attacked Zeet, they would basically be attacking the party he was in. This was why the Swing Guild held back from carrying out their revenge.

“Are you trying to kill me? Is that what you are trying to do?”

“No way.”

It was the truth. They had no plans on killing Zeet. It might make them feel better to just kill him, but not every answer to a problem was to kill the other User.

“We aren't a PK guild.”

The Swing guild wasn't a 'bad manners guild', and they were absolutely not a PK guild.

“We just want your sincere apology, and a promise of a compensation. That is all we want.”

“I didn't even kill him that time! He got killed by a monster!”

As the one suffering this indignity, Zeet thought their actions were ridiculous. Of course, he hadn't behaved well at the time, but he never had any ill intent. It had been an accident. That should be

all there was to it. They shouldn't take revenge on him, because of an accident.

When Zeet raised his voice, the Swing guild members immediately hardened their expressions.

“What’s going on?”

“Who’s that person? Why are you guys fighting?”

The two women in the party reacted in an odd way. They reacted as if they didn't know what was going on. Also, one could tell they were getting annoyed by the situation.

In truth, the four men had mobilized to help the two ladies level up. This was a low level hunting ground for this two women! It was a romantic gesture inside the game. From the view of a third party, these Users were desperately trying to get a date even if it was within a virtual reality.

Anyways, these four Users were trying to be looked favorably by these two women, so they couldn't avoid this confrontation. Moreover, this was a four vs two fight.

‘Should we fight them?’

‘Zeet is a scrub. However, the remaining User... At a glance, he doesn't look like much.’

‘If we fight, we’ll most definitely win. It isn’t as if they have a priest. Isn’t it just a 2 man party?’

The result of the fight was clear. At the very least, it looked obvious to Zeet and the Swing Guild Members.

Zeet gritted his teeth.

“How much do you want?”

This was the worst case scenario for Zeet. If he suffered a Game Over and the Swing guild used the clues gathered from his movements, they might clear the Blackened Remains Quest. His number one priority was to survive this encounter.

“One thousand gold should be enough.”

“Crazy bastards.”

An immediate answer was given at that moment. It hadn’t come out from Zeet’s mouth. It was Zeet’s partner, who had spoken.

‘Huh?’

Zeet tilted his head in confusion.

“Uh?”

“What?”

The Swing guild members also tilted their head in confusion.

Everyone looked at Zeet’s partner. He didn’t look like someone, who would spit out those words, ‘Crazy bastards.’

It was quite the opposite. He looked like a pushover, who would tremble in fear if one yelled, ‘Hey!’, in a mean way.

Everyone was dazed as they stood still for a brief moment.

Zeet’s partner raised his voice.

“It isn’t as if you guys discovered Misandra’s castle, yet you are claiming ownership of a hunting ground? Crazy bastards. I was going to tolerate it, and let it pass, but this is bullshit. If you continue to insist on this bullshit, you guys are sick.”

“Who the hell are you?”

“Me? Will you know me if I inform you? Do you want my character name, real name, home address, birthplace, and birthday? Will you be able to know who I am?”

“.....are you trying to pick a fight with me?”

“Pick a fight with you? Shall we go repeat what was said a moment ago? Shall we go poll, who people think started this quarrel? Do you want to bet 10 thousand gold on it?”

The members of the Swing guild closed their mouth tight.

It wasn't as if what Zeet's partner had said was wrong. If one put aside their grudge, the Swing Guild was basically using their superior number to bully Users. This was the truth.

The only reason why they got away with it was the fact that strength was the law here. If this happened in real life, people would have already reported them to the police.

In other words, Swing guild still held the power here. There was no reason why they should close their mouth and tamp down their anger.

‘Son of a bitch.’

‘Ellie and Yoz is watching us right now. This is a bit embarrassing...’

Viol, who possessed the highest level, moved. He had already reached level 102.

“You are a third party, yet you are inserting yourself into a matter between Zeet and our guild.... How interesting.”

In truth, Viol was a User that shouldn't be present here. He was here to celebrate his Advancement. He was here to help the low level Users, while he impressed others with the Skills he had earned from his Advancement. He had come here to show off. If he was being a little bit more truthful, he had come here, since he had a strong interest in the female User named Ellie.

“If you are trying to pick a fight, you should be more clear about it. Put up your sword. Let's do a 1on1 battle.”

“What are we betting on the match?”

“Let's put our wrist on the line.”

Zeet's expression harden at Viol's confident manner.

‘Don't do it. That bastard already went through his Advancement!’

On the other hand, Zeet's partner smiled.

“All right. I'll accept the terms. If I can't take you down within 3 minutes, I'll work like a dog under the Swing guild for the rest of my life.”

Viol kept his emotion in check when he heard the other User's provocation. This caused him to speak in a way he normally wouldn't.

“We aren't an inferior guild where a bastard like you can just join.”

Viol was markedly different from Zeet's partner, who had on a plain Item setting. As befitting a User, who went through Advancement, he had a fairly robust Item setting. Viol looked the part as he tried to act like a gentleman. He also had his helm off. The fact that his face was exposed meant that he was confident.

“If a certain crazy bitch heard your words, she would have killed you.”

“What?”

“Wait a moment.”

With those words, Zeet's partner bent as if he was picking up something from the floor. When Zeet's partner stood back up, he immediately rushed toward Viol.

Kah-ahng!

The sound of two swords clashing rang out. Viol didn't even have the opportunity to let out an urgent shout.

Poo-hwaht!

At the same time, Zeet's partner threw the sand he was holding in his hand towards Viol's eyes.

Since he wasn't wearing his helm, the sand hit Viol's eyes.

“W...what the hell?”

Viol was taken aback.

Zeet's partner planted his sword between Viol's eyes.

“Kyahhhk!”

It was a more frightening scene for those watching more so than the actual User, who had suffered the attack.

This was how the battle with Viol ended. Viol was in a Blind state as he struggled. Zeet's partner tripped him, then he pushed his foot down hard on Viol's chest. Viol wasn't fully sure what was going on, but he understood he had been overcome. When he had come to this realization, Viol stilled.

“This is the end to the 1on1 battle. I won't confirm my kill, so you can leave after you give me your watch. What about the rest of you? Ah, you can walk past this place. However, you will have to

give a toll fee of 100 gold. Unlike someone else here, I'm giving you guys a very conscientious price.”

Of course, the situation wasn't resolved yet.

The remaining three members raised their weapons. It seemed they weren't willing to pay the toll fee, and walk away from this.

Zeet's partner looked at his opponents, then he spoke to Zeet.

“Hey, Zeet. If these guys try to get their revenge on you on a later date, it isn't my fault. You agree, right?”

Chapter 100. Cursed Domain(4)

“Do you want me to sever your wrist and take your watch? Or do you want to keep your wrist by giving your watch voluntarily to me? Which one would you prefer?”

“I...I'll give it to you.”

“Since I've received your watch, what about the toll fee?”

“What? Toll fee?”

“Don't you want to get past me alive? If you want to get past me, then of course, I would have to receive a toll fee.”

“I don't have any gold right now.....”

“I can take Ingredient Coins or Ingredient Gems. If you don't have those either, you can get a loan. Don't you have a lot of comrades you can get a loan from? Also, you two over there.”

“Yes?”

“Us two?”

“Since the two of you didn't even think about attacking me, I won't take your watches. Instead, you'll have to give me a toll fee.”

“W...we have to give you money too?”

“It is a conscientious price of 100 gold.”

“Can you cut us some slack? We didn’t do anything.”

“Please cut us some slack. We are women...”

“Women? So what? It isn’t as if you girls will date me just because I let you girls go. So why should I let you girls off the hook?”

“So if we go out with you...”

“Ah, sorry. I’ll turn down that offer. The two of you aren’t my cup of tea. Maybe someone will be your white knight? Ah. What do I mean by white knight? I’m asking if anyone here would pay instead of the ladies here.”

Zeet couldn’t believe what was unfolding in front of his eyes. He looked on with an absent-minded expression.

‘My god.’

This had happened in an instant.

The process of defeating Viol happened in an instant. Moreover, the events that happened afterwards also unfolded in an instant.

The other party didn't have a good mix of members. There was a Magician, Priest and Swordsman. The party wasn't made up in a way where they could gang up on a single opponent. In truth, the party had only one Swordsman.

The Swordsman User wasn't able to put up a proper fight.

Kah-ahng!

When the two swords clashed, the Swordsman User's sword bounced off. At the same time, he had lost his balance. This was the result of being overwhelmed by the opponent's Strength Stat.

Of course, when the Swordsman User was stabbed in the eyes, he was afflicted by the Blind effect. Afterwards, the Swordsman User had become a meat shield. Instead of buying time for his Magician, he was used as a shield. The Magician let out the words, "Uh uh? Uh uh!", before he was subdued. The Magician's arms and legs were cut.

When the Magician and Swordsman was subdued, a Priest didn't really have any other choice.

This was how the previous conversation had started.

'I never thought I would personally witness such a thing.'

It was common to see a single person fight multiple opponents in Warlord. This was a game. If one's Spec was overwhelmingly high, a single person could fight against several dozen people.

However, the current situation wasn't the result of differences in Spec. The opponents had been crushed by strength, but something felt different. It felt as if something much stronger had crushed them. It wasn't correct to say it was solely the difference in strength. Was it a difference in temperament? This was a feeling one would get when one saw a tiger tear apart a rabbit.

In that context, this was a hard sight to swallow.

Of course, Zeet had seen videos that was similar to what he was seeing.

‘It isn't as if he is the Hahoe Mask....’

Hahoe Mask.

His battle style was similar to the Hahoe Mask.

Moreover, the sand toss was one of Hahoe Mask's go-to move. In recent days, the Hahoe Mask didn't use the sand toss any more. However, his early fans were a very passionate about the Hahoe Mask's sand toss. Many people became his fan, because of that move.

While Zeet was watching with a slack-jawed expression, the situation was resolved.

The Swing guild members settled each of their account, and they left. Finally, Zeet approached his partner.

“Maybe I should have asked each of them for 200 gold...”

A chill ran up Zeet’s back when he heard his partner talk to himself.

‘What will happen if the Block Field doesn’t open after the Quest is completed? Do I really have to give him money?’

Accompanying the anxiety, he was truly worried about what would happen.

“Is it really ok to act like this? I’m sure they’ll come back for revenge.”

Zeet had fallen out with the Swing guild, and he was still paying the price for it. Swing guild wasn’t that great of a guild, but it was powerful enough to suppress a single User. They had committed the first transgression, yet they weren’t virtuous enough to admit that they were wrong in the first place.

“Don’t worry about it. At their level, they won’t even be able to get a queue ticket to face me.”

His partner had dismissive expression on his face regarding Zeet's worries.

“What?”

Zeet replied with a question, but his partner didn't elaborate on his answer.

“Anyways, let's move quickly. I don't want to unnecessarily get caught up in an annoying business. It seems the other side picked up on what we are doing.”

“Ah!”

Zeet finally came to his senses.

“Yes. We have to move quickly.”

His partner's words were correct. The Swing guild members, who were spared their lives, weren't dummies. They'll go request help from the other guild members. There were a considerable amount of Swing guild members around this region. Zeet personally knew over 10 members.

This was especially true since Viol had been taken down. They would surely try to get their revenge. Viol was someone that was pretty high up in terms of level in the Swing guild. This happened

in any organization, but the way they treat someone depended on how much the member could contribute towards their organization.

This was reason enough to hurry up their pace.

“Are you perhaps a fan of that person?”

During all of this, Zeet asked a question he was very curious about.

“Who?”

“Hahoe Mask.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“No. I’m just saying you have a similar fighting style as the Hahoe Mask. Ah. Of course, the Hahoe Mask is a Necromancer, and you are a Swordsman.”

Zeet’s partner just smirked at his answer. Of course, Zeet’s partner didn’t answer the question.

“Let’s hurry up.”

That was his partner’s answer.

When one plays Warlord, sometimes it feels like one is putting pieces of a puzzle together.

This was how Zeet felt right now.

They diligently searched the hunting ground where the Sick Werewolves appeared. In the process, they found a clue.

As if black rain had fallen from the sky, there were black ink-like marks on the trees, rocks and ground. Moreover, anything that touched the black liquid wasn't doing well. In the case of the tree, the trees were shriveled up only where the black water was touching. The rocks and earth was corroded when in contact with the black liquid.

The black liquid was clearly the source of the problem.

“So this is why the Sick Werewolves appeared.”

Moreover, there was a high probability that the reason why the Sick Werewolves were appearing instead of the normal Werewolves was the effect of the black liquid. In other words, it was highly likely that this place was the location they were looking for.

“Let's just follow it. We can do the clean up later.”

“All right.”

This was like following the breadcrumbs left by Hansel and Gretel. Zeet and his partner followed the black marks. After traveling for awhile, they found a small hidden cave hidden between the foliages.

Moreover, there was a Black Skeleton within the cave. It was praying with its hands clasped like a high priest.

It was the Blackened Remains.

“This is why no one was able to find it. Who would have thought it would be here? ”

When Zeet found it, he spoke in a despondent manner, then he immediately lowered his head.

‘Fucking hell.’

He couldn’t help, but curse inside.

‘I worked like a dog for over two month to be able to see this shabby Skeleton...’

It looked like a worthless Skeleton. In truth, what person likes a skeleton? Skeletons were always an ominous symbol. Yet he had spent two month to find this Skeleton.

It was apt to describe it as him working like a dog. From other people's perspective, he had basically wasted two month. From Zeet's perspective, it felt as if he had dug a hole for two months. It wasn't funny.

However, at that moment, he felt an emotion that he had only felt when he began playing Warlord.

‘Still, this is a first.’

No one had been able to accomplish this. Countless number of people had given up on this Quest, and he was the first one to complete it. He wouldn't characterize it as coming in 1st place, but it was a monumental moment for him.

“Thank you.”

Zeet's partner shrugged his shoulders when he heard Zeet speak.

“We can exchange pleasantries later. However, there's something I'd like you to keep in mind.”

“Keep in mind?”

“If we break open this Quest and the Block Field isn't gone, then you'll have to a choice to make like those Swing guild members.”

Zeet smirked at those words. He laughed as he replied.

“You really are a strange bastard.”

His partner shrugged his shoulder. Zeet didn't take his words to be a threat. He thought his partner was playing with his words. Of course, his partner might be warning him in truth, but Zeet didn't care in the end.

“All right. If it doesn't come down, I'll give you the money. I'll give you a thousand gold.”

As he spoke, Zeet carefully picked up the Skeleton. When Zeet's hands touched the Skeleton, everything except the skull disintegrated into dust.

“Uh? What the hell?”

“It must have eroded.”

“D...does this mean we failed the Quest?”

“Since the skull is the only thing left, it means we should take it. We just have to escort it to where it wanted to go.”

Zeet came to his sense when he heard the word 'escort'.

‘Ah.’

It was time to part ways. Zeet felt a sense of loss.

Zeet hadn’t made any comrades up until now. It was true that a part of the reason why no one wanted to play with him was the fact that Zeet wasn’t exceptionally skilled. However, the biggest obstacle had been the fact that Zeet was annoyed by the other Users.

What kind of game would it be if one only focused on leveling up and hunting? One had to enjoy the game itself for it to be a game for him. He wasn’t interested in hunting like a mad man to become the best. That was a minor part of the game for him. It was pointless.

This line of thought discouraged the need to find a comrade.

However, for the first time he had found a User, who he wanted to play the game with. Regrettably, it wouldn’t be possible.

‘At a glance, he is an expert, who had hid his level. There is no way he would want to play the game with me.’

He had caught on awhile ago. He realized that his partner wasn’t a small fry like him.

“Yes. Let’s end this.”

Zeet put on a smile.

‘I want to play the game with a guy like this.’

In the future, Zeet would come to be known as the Quest Man. This was the moment that started it all.

It happened the moment Hyrkan reached the peak of Ricky Mountain. An Announcement was heard inside his ears.

[You gained the Title ‘Person who Conquered the Peak of the Ricky Mountain’.]

He was finally at the peak.

This meant the Block Field had been removed. Hyrkan raised his head to look at the lake that was located on the other side of the mountain.

‘I invested 3 days on this.’

He had to dispel the Block Field. Without any plans, he had used up 3 days to open the door.

However, Hyrkan let out a sigh of relief instead of being

frustrated.

‘I’m fortunate that there was guy like Zeet here.’

Zeet.

If he hadn’t been here, he wouldn’t have been able to finish the Quest in 3 days. This was why he didn’t say his time had been wasted. He was actually thankful.

‘I’m really thankful for that guy.’

If Users like Zeet didn’t exist, how much time would Hyrkan have had to spend in dispelling the Block Field by himself? One week? Maybe Hyrkan would have had to retire here.

‘Guys like him make Warlord go around.’

Zeet and Users like him were the small components located all over Warlord. They were willing to to the small detailed tasks, so the Warlord Users could advance.

The world was like a clock. There were large and expensive parts, but one won’t be able to make the clock work with just those components. The small parts played a role that was as important as the large parts. The Rankers of the 30 great guilds determined the flow of Warlord, but in the end, Warlord was made up of regular Users.

Of course, this wasn't an important story for Hyrkan.

Hyrkan didn't go too deep into his reverie. He wasn't in a situation where he would allow himself to fall into a reverie.

Hyrkan harbored a suspicion.

'This doesn't match with the info I know.'

Cursed Domain.

Hyrkan knew that this place was of low importance in the Immoral Prince section of the Main Quest.

[The Cursed Domain is where the the Immoral Prince carried out his experiments. This was the location where power of Corruption was exposed to the monsters through his experiments. It was also the location where the clue about the Immoral Prince could be found.]

This was all the facts Hyrkan knew about the Cursed Domain.

If he looked at the current situation, Hyrkan knew this wasn't a stage he could easily finish. This might take awhile.

‘A barrier.’

If the scenario is as Zeet surmised, the barrier had been made by those who had run away from the Cursed Domain. On top of that, the Blackened Remains acquired by Zeet was the remain of the Magician that had been maintaining the barrier with his magic.

It wasn't a simple Block Field set in place by the System. There were a lot of cases where a Block Field was set by a Scenario. The Battlefield he had fought at the Terube castle wall was a prime example.

Moreover, if one crossed a Block Field linked to a Scenario, there was a pretty important Event Stage on the other side. For example, the Frozen Kingdom was across the Terube castle wall.

The heart of the problem was the fact that Hyrkan didn't have any information about that important stage.

‘I'm sure of it. Someone pocketed the Cursed Domain, and the information was never released.’

This meant the Users from the time before Hyrkan returned to the past had cleared the Cursed Domain, and they had never disclosed this fact to the public.

‘This place is where level 140 monsters show up....’

One would have to be at least level 140 to hunt at a hunting

ground of this quality. The Event probably required a higher level than 140, yet he had never heard about it. There weren't many organizations that could cleanly swallow the whole event.

It could only be pulled off by the 30 great guilds and the Underfoot guilds. This meant there was a high chance the Cursed Domain held something very delicious. It was something worth hiding.

Hyrkan organized his current situation.

‘I don't have any information.’

Hyrkan had no idea what the Cursed Domain held.

‘Moreover, my level is only in the 120s.’

It wasn't entirely impossible for him to go to a level 140 hunting ground, but it wasn't an easy stage for him.

‘I don't care if a dog or a cow shows up. However, I'm sure it won't be an ordinary dog or cow.’

When such a stage opened, a dog or a cow would appear. However, the dog might be a trained attack dog instead of a normal dog. A bull could come out instead of a normal cow, and he would be the matador with no experience in facing these bulls.

These were the mountains Hyrkan would have to climb in the future.

Hyrkan put on his Hahoe Mask and he smiled.

‘This will be fun.’

Rumors in Warlord traveled faster than the wind.

“Did you hear about it? The Block Field across Misandra’s Castle was dispelled.”

“Over there? How?”

“The Blackened Remains was found.”

“Who found it? I thought that Quest was a bug? I thought no one was able to find it?”

“His name is Zeet. Anyways, he found it.”

Rumors in Warlord was highly combustible. The fuse was lit immediately.

“So what’s across the Block Field?”

“The Users are disseminating information as they thoroughly

search the mountain. However, it seems the place is crawling with unexpectedly strong monsters. The lowest level monsters are over level 140. The average level of the hunt is around level 150.”

“Level 150? That’s incredible! I bet the Rankers are very interested in that place.”

When the fire burns hot, the flame sometimes make the person drunk.

“Moreover, there is a rumor going around. The location might be an Event Stage and the reward is a Unique Item.”

“What?”

“Think about it. It’s a level 150 Event location, and the reward is a Unique item. Doesn’t that mean the reward is a level 150 or higher Unique Item?”

“A level 150 Unique item.... Wasn’t there a recently sold Item like that?”

“It was a Level 150 Unique Item that Dropped from the Blue Dragon Slime Raid. It was a Magic Wand. It was sold at 250,000 gold, but the sale was a dud. In the end, it was traded for a level 140 Full Unique Defensive Set.”

“That’s a ridiculous price. Two hundred fifty thousand gold....”

“The User backed out of the deal. He said he would rather use it than sell it for only 250,000 gold.”

They were drunk on the recent events, so they started talking nonsense.

This was how lies and rumors spread rapidly across Warlord.